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## Forthcoming

A CLARIFICATION OF QUESTIONS  
AN UNABRIDGED TRANSLATION  
OF RESALEH TOWZIH AL-MASAEI  
AYATOLLAH KHOEINIAyatollah Khomeini  
translated by J. Borzjerdi, with a  
Foreword by Michael M.J. Fisher and  
Mehdi Abedi

This unabridged translation of Ayatollah Khomeini's A CLARIFICATION OF QUESTIONS provides a unique picture of the belief structure of Shi'ism. A compendium of 3,000 'questions', Khomeini's treatise is intended to guide laymen in their religious duties, as well as to cover all of life's questions and needs, from personal hygiene and ritual purity to organ transplants and modern banking. The RESALEH TOWZIH AL-MASAEI, the latest in a long tradition of similar writings, reveals how the external world is viewed by the Shi'ite faithful. Khomeini's imprimatur gives it special relevance today.

July 1984, 432 pages, paper \$28.00

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Hoffmann

In this book, the Hoffmanns present the background to the confrontation between Argentina and Britain, as well as an analysis of the present situation. Clarifying the importance of the seemingly insignificant, remote islands in the South Atlantic, over which European nations nearly went to war several times, and which England wrested from Argentina in the 1830's, the authors trace the history of the dispute, the involvement of the U.S., and the impact of the recent war on inter-American relations.

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## The Times Literary Supplement

June 15 1984 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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Cover picture

## Guardians of memory

## S. S. PRAWER

## E. H. GOMBRICH

*Tributes: Interpreters of our cultural tradition*  
270pp. Oxford: Phaidon. £17.50.  
07148 23384

This is a book about "guardians of memory": those who have kept alive the ideas and values of centuries of intellectual and spiritual life and who have, in their turn, added to these ideas and values. In writing about them, Sir Ernst Gombrich shows himself to be one of their number. He calls his book *Tributes*, meaning tributes to others; but it is, in fact, also a tribute to his publishers are rightly paying to their most distinguished author on his seventy-fifth birthday. No one else could have provided so appropriate a *Festschrift*.

Gombrich's special gift is that of making us see - in the double sense of making us look afresh at our world and its artefacts and of making us understand their nature, their history, and their actual as well as their potential place in our lives. The opening of the very first piece in this book, an address delivered to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in May 1981, provides an excellent example of his way with things and with an occasion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the programme you hold in your hands is printed in characters we derive from the Phoenicians, modified by the Greeks, the Romans and by Carolingian scribes whose forms were taken up in the Italian Renaissance; the numerals have reached us from ancient India via the Arabs; the paper on which it is printed is an invention of the Chinese which came West in the eighth century, when the Arabs took Chinese prisoners who taught them the art of paper-making. The term Friday, of course, comes from the substitution of a Teutonic goddess, Frigg, for the ancient goddess Venus; or rather for the planetary deity to which one of the seven-day cycle was assigned in late antiquity, the cycle we call the week.

I wanted to remind you of the extent to which we are the heirs of many and diverse civilizations to make my first point: that within the life of the mind I regard the humanities as representing the faculty of memory, the memory of our culture.

By asking his hearers to look closely at their programmes he has taken them on an excursion through many centuries and many countries and has introduced them to the questions he is going to raise in a way that well befits the man who directed the fortunes of the Warburg Institute during the most fruitful years of its development. "Over the entrance to that Institute," he later reminds his American audience,

"you can read in Greek characters the word which its founder wanted to be inscribed there, MNEMOSYNE, Memory, the mother of the Muses". As mother of the Muses, Memory is more than a repository of facts. It is a repository of values, too; and Gombrich again and again shows us, here and elsewhere, how to balance objectivity and subjectivity, factual research and personal response, looking and interpreting as he activates our sense of wonder, of admiration or of horror by confronting us anew with works of art that men have fashioned - works which exhibit all that man can be.

If "I want to make you see" is one motto that might be inscribed on the title-pages of all Gombrich's books, "only connect" is another. His curiosity - a directed, not an idle curiosity - extends to the printed or spoken word as much as to the picture, to the piece of music as much as to the statue; and the old ambition of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, to see all the arts together in their social and temporal context, is again and again fulfilled by a man who has a keen eye for the telling particular and who can therefore avoid that vice of unfocused generality which has deservedly given *Geistesgeschichte* such a bad name.

The "guardians of memory" whose contributions to our culture come under close scrutiny in *Tributes* include one eighteenth-century figure: G. E. Lessing, whose views on the diversity of the arts are re-examined and whose style of writing and thinking is imaginatively related to the game of chess which brought Lessing and Mendelssohn together; and one towering figure of the nineteenth century: Hegel, whose claim to be the real "Father of Art History" is vigorously asserted against the claims of Winckelmann. The lives and activities of all the others reach into the twentieth century. There is a characteristic piece about Lord Leverhulme, whose practical philanthropy provided opportunities for civilized living which we neglect at our peril - a piece which once again shows Gombrich's unique sense of occasion by using the name "Sunlight Soap" to demonstrate ways of linking our sensory experience with our emotional life. The argument is serious, but the twinkle in Gombrich's eye is unmistakable. There is a piece on Freud, which examines the implication of Freud's analyses of verbal wit for all the arts, and shows how perilously close Freud's rejection of Modernism brought him to theories of "degenerate art" that were most fully formulated and applied in quarters wholly opposed to him and all

he stood for. Other "tributes" scrutinize the cultural psychology of Aby Warburg; Johan Huizinga's analyses of the role that "play" fills in our cultural lives; the exemplary contribution made by George Boas to the notion and the practice of History of Ideas; I. A. Richards' aesthetics; and the personality and achievement of Dame Frances Yates. The book ends with Gombrich's recollections of his collaboration with two remarkable Austrian Jews: Ernst Kris, psychologist and historian of art, who inspired Gombrich's seminal essay on caricature, and Otto Kurz, explorer extraordinary of contacts between different cultures.

These essays are not always free of criticism - the piece on Huizinga, for example, expresses grave reservations about his methods and conclusions; but they are all informed by sympathy, and by a profound empathetic understanding of the agonies and dilemmas which confronted these guardians and influenced their work. And running through this book, as through so many of Gombrich's writings, is a continuing tribute to Sir Karl Popper, whose views on investigation of origins, on verification, on trial and error, on creative self-criticism and on "World Three" - the world of problem solutions which is also the world of culture and art - we find quoted with approval again and again. We are reminded that the notion of "making and matching", which has proved so fruitful in art-criticism, is one that Gombrich derived from pondering problems Popper had raised in other contexts.

Most of the pieces in this book were spoken before they were printed: and Gombrich is indeed a master of the lecture, the paper, the piece that makes its point in under an hour's listening time. This form has certain dangers which even such a master of it cannot wholly avoid. There is the danger of the generalizing aside, for instance; those of us who think *Clarissa* one of the greatest novels ever written can only wince when we hear Sir Ernst's dismissive reference to "Richardson's sentimental best-sellers". There is the danger of the point incompletely made: as when he urges against Lessing's *Laocöon* that the "famous controversy whether the marble *Laocöon* shows or groans" is of no interest:

Not even a photograph of that ghastly event would necessarily tell us that. Signs being signs, the information they convey will always be selective. Hagesandros and his assistants have concentrated in the *Laocöon* all the signs for pain and agony which Greek art had evolved over centuries. To ask what noise the poor priest emits is as pointless as to ask after the colour of his hair.

True enough, but that is not the question with which Lessing is really concerned. What he wants to know, rather, is whether a gaping hole in the figure's face - *Laocöon's* wide open mouth - would not have been an aesthetic blemish that the sculptured *Laocöon's* half-open lips skillfully avoid. Nor can I think it fair to Hegel, to Marx or to the dialectic to say that Marx "opposed to Hegel's theories of the primacy of the spirit the antithesis of the primacy of matter, in order, to use the famous double meaning of the dialectic, both to cancel and preserve the system (*aufheben*)". What has happened here is that Gombrich has concentrated so much on the metaphorical meanings of *aufheben* that he neglects what is surely the word's most literal meaning: to lift up, to raise to a higher level. As befits the central term of the dialectic, *aufheben* has three meanings, not two, and the one Gombrich so strangely omits is arguably the very one that is most important to Hegel as it is to Marx. One might see this as a small but telling instance of over-selectivity: a danger that besets the "lecture" or "paper" form in many guises. Its clearest instance in *Tributes* is the piece which professes to be "An Interpretation of the Poetics of I. A. Richards" yet manages to avoid even the mention of such keywords as *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Practical Criticism* and *Science and Poetry*.

One danger of the short form this book, like its predecessors in the Gombrich canon, triumphantly avoids, however: the danger of disjunction, of eclectic jumping from one subject to the next. All the essays in *Tributes* are informed by a common spirit, a common set of concerns; and even where, as in the case of I. A. Richards, they do not tell us a great deal about their ostensible subject, they do make important points about the nature of tradition, the role of aesthetics in the history of the arts, and about "feed-back" as a principle of progress, which are supported by telling quotations and imaginatively chosen visual examples. Indeed, the Richards essay has sections on "Grief in Greek Art" and on Michelangelo's "Moses" which may be seen as important additions to the analyses and descriptions which have guided my steps, as they have those of so many others, in the appreciation of the visual arts: the analyses and descriptions which make up Gombrich's ever useful and ever delightful *The Story of Art*.

The subjects of *Tributes* all show what Gombrich calls "intellectual courage". He means by this not only the courage to advance into un-

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## Grecian, with omissions

Kerry Downes

DOROTHY STROUD  
Sir John Soane Architect  
300pp, with 222 illustrations. Faber, £32.  
0 571 13050 X

When I go to my bank in Reading I pass the remains of Soane's monument for Edward Simeon in the Market Place, now inextricably tangled with the outcrop of a public convenience. Having grown up in Ealing, I came to be familiar with his remarkable and enchanting sometime country villa, which formed part of the public library, before I had any idea of the nature or the quality of what I was seeing. Next I remember the excitement in student days of discovering the photographs in Steele and Yerbury's *Old Bank of England*, an excitement clouded by knowledge that virtually nothing but the outside walls survived.

Thus were brought home to me the architectural facts of life: that great buildings are mortal, subject to decay, to neglect physical or mental, to devaluation, to the pressures of real estate value and of social and technological change. It was nevertheless shocking in the early post-war years to find that this destruction had taken place as recently as about 1930.

The Bank of England occupied forty-five years of Soane's life, and as Dorothy Stroud says, "two chests of accounts, fourteen bill books, a great deal of correspondence and over six hundred drawings" concerning it are preserved in the Soane Museum. She devotes twenty-six illustrations and a few pages to the Bank commission, without mention of either the fact or the date of the building's destruction. This reticence is not untypical of the low key of her monograph, which to the reader unfamiliar with the subject does not convey the immense amount of archival study that has gone into its preparation.

Soane bequeathed to the Nation his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, his library — even his school books — and his private and professional papers, his collection of drawings, models, works of art and curious objects. The Soane is his museum not only in the sense that he formed it but also in that many of its contents were made by or for him. Not all this material is Soane material: there are Italian Renaissance architectural drawings and one of the most important collections of drawings by Wren and his school. He acquired these and other treasures by purchase or by gift at a time when it was rather uncommon for an architect to have such an interest in the history of his profession but when an album of Wren drawings was there for the asking.

Soane's concern with history was not only unusual, it was also partial: the Museum possesses the big coloured drawings of past architecture made, before the era of the lantern-slide, to illustrate his Royal Academy lectures. Their architecture also contributed to the mix of his own style. Soane's eclecticism was quite different from that of the Victorians, for whereas they would obviously and proudly choose the style, or mixture of styles, to suit the commission, whatever Soane took from the past was metabolized into Soane.

The earlier stages of this process are the subject of Pierre du Prey's recent study (*John Soane: The making of an architect*, 1982) but the process is of more than academic importance, for two reasons. First, because the mature style seems hardly to reveal its origins in Soane's studies, but appears rather the result of revelation or of a special magic. Second,

## Campus style

JEAN F. BLOCK  
The Uses of Gothic: Planning and building the campus of the University of Chicago 1892-1932.  
262p. University of Chicago Press, £20.  
0 943056 020

In *The Uses of Gothic* Jean F. Block gives a conscientious account of the University of Chicago's long allegiance to the Gothic style of building, from the university's founding in 1892 until the uniformity was broken in the 1930s. Although the treatment is not imagina-

ate for us something of the physical as well as the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere in which his life has been spent. The essay by Frances Yates, one of the most moving and instructive in the book, has a paragraph on Warburg Institute just after the Second World War which exhibits in shortest compass the mingling of humour, affection, respect, insight and concern for the quality of life which mark Gombrich's writings such excellent company.

When I returned after the war, late in 1945, the Institute was housed in South Kensington, in the former Senate and Library premises in the Imperial Institute Building, and there I was privileged to experience the triumph of mind over matter. There was a self-service canteen in the dark and dismal basement which served some of the vilest food on offer even in those days of austerity. Not all my colleagues braved the horrors of dubious mince-meat, veggie greens and mashed potatoes made of "pot" (white not black) but I did, and I did not think that Frances Yates or Rudolf Wittkower, noticed what they were eating. I did, but I ate down with them and sometimes with Charles Mackell at one of the long tables to listen to their lively conversations. The depressing surroundings were turned as by magic into one of those occasions when the topic of Frances's research.

The magic transformation of a less than beautiful world which that last sentence brings before us is obviously related, not only to intellectual discussion but also to art, as Gombrich does indeed show, here and elsewhere, how the artists he admires use to develop the traditions of representation and their predecessors and contemporaries used to effect a similar kind of transfiguration.

Gombrich's tastes, in literature and music as well as in the visual arts, are wide and catholic; but they are not (notoriously not, as we would say) all-inclusive. He is hostile to modern art and architecture, and he justifies his dislikes as eloquently as his admiration. He detests above all movements and manifestoes that seek to discredit the art of the past: the name of "contemporaneity" or in that the future. "We must not demand," he writes against all the Marinettis of our century, "that the critic should have no prejudices and in dreams of the future. But theoretically, he has the right to operate with the slogan: 'Our Age' and even less of 'Future Ages'." In though we will not expect to find him among the champions of "Concrete Poetry" or "shape experimentation at the remotest edges of the arts, we cannot impute narrowness to a critic who reminds his readers that it is "precisely the strength of art that it can be appreciated and practised on any scale from the tending of a house-plant to the laying out of ground," or a self-proclaimed "guardian of memory" who explicitly rejects the kind of antiquarianism which concentrates on "styles" and "genres" to the exclusion of the human beings who create, demand and "receive" art. In his tribute to Lord Leverhulme he writes:

"The works of man were made to be understood; we want to find out what they mean or meant to their makers and to their age — it is an inborn need and there is no short cut to this intellectual goal. The works of nature impose no such demands and so such heart-searchings. We cannot understand a work as we might understand Michelangelo's Moses. The first case we must be subjective. In the second we should try to transcend our personal reactions. And yet, I hope, I have never overdrawn this undoubted contrast. We must not repress our humanity when standing before the Moses. We can be impressed by the majestic grandeur of Egyptian sculpture, the poise of Greek statues, the mysterious glow of Byzantine icons, the serenity of Renaissance Madonnas, or the playfulness of Rococo decoration, yet not falling into the trap which I have described as the 'physiognomic fallacy', the trap of confusing the style with the age or, worse, with the ideas and women who made up the age."

"We must not repress our humanity, what could better sum up the endeavours of this lover of the arts, who has learnt by bitter experience that an aesthetic education cannot by itself make a good man, and who has nevertheless kept a faith in the importance of such education which equals that of Schopenhauer, this great critic and historian of culture, who never ceased to feel that the styles he described so meticulously were charged with enormous meaning; this clearheaded analyst who tells his readers: 'Art demands involvement', or else it will turn into artefacts."

In *Tributes* Gombrich has shown himself once again, an "interpreter of our cultural tradition" whose voice we cannot afford to disregard.

well to follow. "It would indeed be worth while", Gombrich writes, "to assemble a small anthology of passages in which, tired of arid disquisitions, Hegel gives us his spontaneous reaction to painting. The grinding noise of his conceptual mill is silenced, giving way to a real love of the work of art." Such an anthology might, indeed, extend to works of literature and music too, and might induce a new respect for Hegel even in those who shy away from his relentless system-building and in disciples whose mumbo-jumbo is all too easily mistaken, by commentators less perceptive than Gombrich, for profundity.

The reanimation of a conventional metaphor in the passage about the "grinding noise" of Hegel's "conceptual mill" which I have just quoted serves to alert us to another virtue these *Tributes* share with their author's earlier writings. Gombrich can handle, and explain lucidly, isms of all kinds; his essay on Hegel operates with such terms as "aesthetic transcendentalism" (carefully distinguished from the transcendental aesthetics of Kant), "historical collectivism", "historical determinism", "metaphysical optimism" and "dialectic relativism"; but such terms are transformed when they are brought before us as the "weird names" of five giants against which their opponents charge as Don Quixote once charged against windmills — giants presented as close relatives of "the mythical Proteus, since they remain constant in every metamorphosis". His description of Freud's view of dream-consciousness may owe something to Yeats's "foul rag-and-bone-shop of the heart", but it has a genuine force of its own: "according to Freud's model of the psyche the library of our waking consciousness is supplemented by one deposited in a dark basement where books and loose pages are piled up in wild confusion".

Sensitive to metaphor in his own style, Gombrich can also appreciate it in others. Of the opening line of the Templar's monologue in Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, in which the speaker sees himself as an animal led to the sacrifice which wearily rests for a moment — "Hier hält das Opfer tier ermüdet still" — Gombrich says, with characteristic empathy and human as well as literary concern: "I wonder if there is any line in German drama more irrationally moving than this comparison of the harassed mind with the tired animal on the way to the altar. It is hardly fanciful to read in it something of the terrible lassitude which often overcame Lessing in his last year of solitude." No one has a greater right than a critic who writes in this way to call, as Gombrich does in the essay on Freud, for "a special branch of psychology which might be called 'metaphorics'".

Psychological concerns run through all these essays: the psychic tensions and difficulties of men like Warburg and Huizinga are tactfully probed and related to the special qualities Gombrich perceives in their writings. Above all, we find constant explorations of the psychology of seeing and appreciating works of art. But despite Gombrich's close collaboration with at least one committed disciple of Freud, and his respect for Freud's own insights, he remains steadfastly detached from psychoanalysis and its jargon. It is characteristic of him that he prefers what he calls "feedback theories" — those which stress the interaction of tradition and the individual talent — to theories of "self-expression". For all his concern with the way in which a given style, or a given language, meets an artist half-way, he never forgets, and he never allows his readers to forget, the living men and women who create art, who "receive" art, and who keep memory and tradition alive.

Perhaps the most delightful aspect of this new collection, and that which most distinguishes it from its predecessors, is the way in which autobiography is constantly interwoven with Gombrich's "tributes" to his chosen "guardians of memory". These essays allow us to watch him gather his first experiences of the visual arts under the guidance of a father to whom art had become a substitute for religion; we learn details of his schooldays and of his rigorous academic apprenticeship under Julius von Schlosser; we meet him in conference, debate and collaboration with Kris and Kurz, and constantly come upon passages that recre-

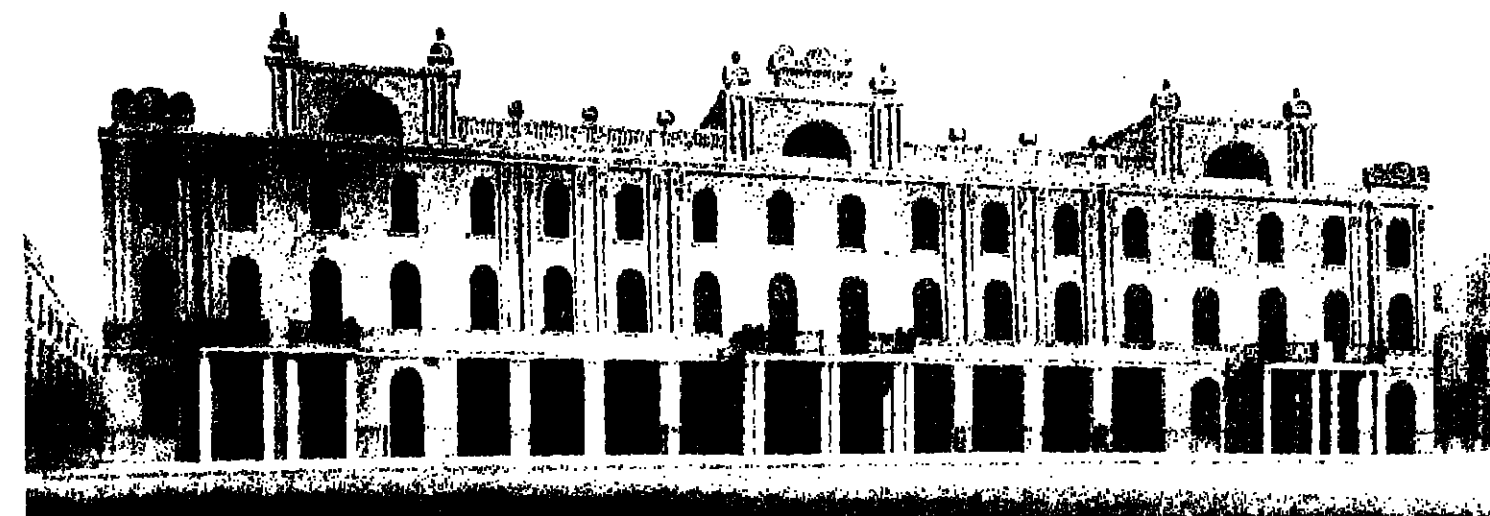
known territories within some special field they have made their own, but also the courage to transcend frontiers of specialization — to make constant forays into domains jealously guarded by self-appointed frontier-guardians, *Grenzshüter*, whether these be literary scholars, musicologists, psychoanalysts, anthropologists, historians, or other scholarly commentators on our political, social, emotional and intellectual lives. Indeed, a suspicion of *Grenzshüter* is something Gombrich shares with Aby Warburg, whose motto, *das Wort zum Bild* (bring the picture together with all words that might be relevant to its understanding) animated his collector's zeal and guided his construction of the unique library which has proved one of Hitler's most precious gifts to this country. What Warburg tried to provide was a physical home for his humanist ideal of *Denkraum der Besonnenheit* — space for that reflective thought which is the enemy of ideology and "thinking with the blood".

But no ideology, no ways of thinking and feeling, however alien, were to be excluded from consideration in the *Denkraum* Warburg sought to construct; the scholar would have to cultivate that detachment or "suspension" which George Boas, whom Gombrich rightly calls an *anima naturaliter Warburgiana*, once described as willingness "to treat ideas that seem silly or superstitious and that are perhaps obsolete with the same care as [one] would give to established truths. For the history of ideas tells us among other things how we got to think the way we do — and if that is not of importance, I wonder what is." Gombrich shows again and again how cultural historians like Frances Yates or Otto Kurz or Boas himself cultivated this necessary virtue, but how they also managed to combine it with an uncompromising sense of values exhibited in their (often tragic) lives as much as in their writings.

All the essays, in their different ways, speak of the forms a firm and well-grounded sense of values may take. Nothing could be further

from this author's mind than the wish to foster a relativism of purely descriptive neutrality that would assimilate the humanities to the natural sciences, or a contrary retreat into *l'art pour l'art* aestheticism. He has the courage to prefer some works of art, and some life-styles, to others, and to explain why he does so; and he concerns himself in these essays, not only with understanding and appreciation, but also with practical questions of education in the widest sense. The essay on Lord Leverhulme, especially, suggests ways of introducing school-children to an art that is greater and more enriching than that of the comics, and passionately counters those "highly articulate spokesmen" for the normally inarticulate "who denounce civilized values as privileges in disguise". He may, in his special context, seek to praise Lessing by saying that he was "always engaged but never committed"; but his own commitment to civilized values and human decency is as little in doubt as Lessing's.

It will surprise no one to find this friend and disciple of Popper suspicious of the kind of universal system which was Hegel's ambition to construct. He is ever wary of what a kindred spirit, Erwin Panofsky, once called the "boa constructor". Yet the essay on Hegel shows remarkable empathy, and directs our attention to qualities of Hegel's writing which his disciples have all too frequently overlooked — qualities which transcend his system-building, but also qualities which the very effort to build the system has fostered and brought out. "Hegel's efforts to examine each form of art according to its ability to express certain spiritual values", Gombrich tells us, "led him to describe the painter's medium with a clarity that has rarely been equalled, before or since, in the history of art." He then goes on to quote a splendid passage on Dutch painting from Hegel's *Aesthetics*, showing that much-maligned philosopher's genuine love and understanding of such works of art as he actually managed to see in his short life, and he throws out one of many suggestions in this book which we would do



Soane's scheme for a block of shops, with houses above, in Regent Street, between Chapel Court and Bank Street. Erected in 1820-1, the building has since been demolished. An illustration from the book reviewed here.

because Soane's example, more than his direct influence, still resonates in the architecture of our own time.

His art is one of space and of emptiness, of force and of understatement, of great masses and pencil-thin lines. He is a master of omission, substituting vertical bands for pilasters, bending piers into arches without impost mouldings, constantly paring down the received vocabulary of Grecian architecture. Then there is the obsessiveness that we find in all great architecture: Soane's obsessions are not only with certain motifs like acroteria but also to do with shape and shade and light. The elision of piers into arches is part of a larger pattern of fusion, as from ceilings to vaults, from external domes to finials. He was a master of the concealed window, the directed light and the suspended ceiling, all of which were once best seen in the Bank of England and are probably now best seen in the Dulwich Picture Gallery and the museum-house in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The Soane industry was started by the architect himself, even as he began to form the collection that would become his museum. He employed draughtsmen to record his own works as they were and his projects as they might have been, and one of the most elaborate and surprising of the water-colours made for him shows the whole Bank complex from the air, cut away like the roofless ruins of Roman imperial baths. The staff of his museum have often been notable scholars, not only and inevitably of Soane but also of other architectural subjects. Miss Stroud's book is the latest fruit of this domestic industry, and is (as the jacket rightly says) the culmination of a lifetime's research, especially though by no means exclusively in the Soane archive.

The book is in two parts of roughly equal length: the first is a biography which contains much new and minute information on the architect's life, although reticence in the discussion of sources fails to distinguish between what is new and what may be found, for example, in the *Portrait of Sir John Soane* (1927) by an earlier in-house scholar, Arthur Bolton. Stroud tells "the Soane story" quietly and precisely; but this first part of the book is only the background to any assessment of his stature as an artist, a stature which is assumed here but

whose only demonstration is in the illustrations. The second part of the book is a *catalogue raisonné* in which all Soane's architectural works and projects are listed and the major ones (seventy-two out of 329) receive longer entries.

The biography is new; the catalogue was originally prepared many years ago in manuscript, and a version of it was published, with many of the present illustrations, in 1961 (it has long been unobtainable). The new book is smaller in format and looks more like the serious work it is; on the other hand the treatment of illustrations has not improved. The photographs, although perfectly clear, have the char-

acteristic offset look that we have come reluctantly to accept as normal in art books, and few of them bring Soane off the page. The text entries have been carefully revised, and so have the illustrations. Although, with 222 included, it may seem ungrateful to wish for more even in a book at this price, I personally regret that not even a detail is given of the Simeon monument and that the interior photographs of the Ealing house have been dropped.

*Sir John Soane Architect* is welcome. It will not blaze a new trail for Soane: its moderation addresses it to the converted and the curious; but in future it must be the starting-point of every investigation of the architect's work.

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# Robert Parker

WALTER BURKERT

*Homo Necans*: The anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth  
Translated by Peter Bing  
335pp. University of California Press.  
£19.95.  
0520 036506

Walter Burkert's *Homo Necans*, "Man the Killer", was first published in 1972, the same year as René Girard's *La Violence et le sacré*. Both writers sought, unfashionably, to present a general theory of sacrifice, and both interpreted the practice as above all an act of violence, a cathartic discharge of human aggression against an animal victim. The two books, independently conceived, are evidently products of the anxious modern debate about aggression, and both are touched with prophetic pessimism. The educated reader in the English-speaking world is much more likely to have heard of Girard, a French literary critic addressing a general audience, than of the German classical scholar Burkert, whose work first appeared in the austere format of the series "Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten". But Burkert has the advantage of an incomparable knowledge of the sacrificial practices of the ancient Greeks and indeed of the entire ancient world. Boldness of theory and consummate learning are united in him as in few others.

Why do men kill in order to worship? How can violence be sacred? These for Burkert are the central problems. "Because of the guilt and exaltation (characteristic 'religious' emotions) that killing evokes", is his answer in brief, but the full answer takes us far back into prehistory. He starts from a well-known study of "Greek sacrificial practices" by the Swiss scholar Karl Meuli. Meuli argued that the treatment of bones in the Greek sacrificial ritual perpetuated archaic practices of a kind still found among Siberian hunting peoples, who seek to hush the guilt or anxiety that they feel over killing by various ritual means, including a symbolic re-assembly and consecration of the animal's bones. He pointed to similar symbolic atonements or denials of culpability in Greek ritual, the practice, for instance, of tricking the animal into nodding con-

sented to its own immolation. There was above all the extraordinary Athenian festival of Bouphonia, at which the sacrificer dropped the axe after striking the fatal blow and fled, a mock trial was held, and the sacrificial knife was found guilty of the crime and thrown into the sea. In a paradigm of "making good" the slaughtered ox was then stuffed with straw and re-harnessed to the plough. Meuli spoke here of a "comedy of innocence".

Burkert takes over the emphasis on hunters and on guilt, but adds ideas derived from ethologists, Konrad Lorenz in particular. Primitive man must kill to live, but may not kill his own kind. By killing animals he diverts his aggressive impulses from his fellow men. It is, indeed, this shared experience of violence that binds together the hunting-band: "as ethology has shown, a sense of community arises from collective aggression." But even this necessary violence causes guilt, because the hunter feels how easily he might have directed his aggression against another man. Now, a ritual in ethnological terms is "a behavioral pattern that has lost its primary function... but persists in a new function, that of communication". "Sacrifice" is killing thus ritualized. The primary function had been that of killing to eat, the secondary communicative function was something about life, death, power and belonging to a group. Such a ritual could easily outlive the hunting civilization in which it had its origin. In the heart of the book Burkert surveys a wide range of Greek festivals which he sees as being based on an encounter, through sacrifice, with the horrific. The abominations that mythology makes explicit - human sacrifice, cannibalism and the like - are what the ritual implies.

These interpretations of particular festivals are of an extraordinary brilliance. At a wave of Burkert's wand the most disparate materials come together, and a compelling drama about life's basic concerns is revealed where others had seen mere agricultural magic. His darting, incisive style (which inevitably loses much even in Peter Bing's very serviceable translation) adds to the excitement of the book. It is, of course, a thoroughly controversial work. In its concern with the origins of sacrifice it recalls the age of the great anthropological theorists, who set out on heroic but ill-fated quests in search of the very origins of religion. The heroic age came to an end with the rise of modern ethnography, which showed how sim-

plistic many of the old evolutionary hypotheses had been, and how crude were the pioneers' intuitive models of primitive psychology. Such ethnography has been more influential in England and France than in Germany, and Burkert refers to its findings only occasionally. But one cannot help wondering whether the hunters' rituals adduced by Meuli might not be a phenomenon characteristic of certain Eurasian peoples rather than the necessary behaviour of *homo sapiens* at a particular stage in his development. There is, certainly, archaeological evidence that some early hunters paid ritual honours to their victims (though Burkert himself notes, in the most significant of the rather limited additions to the English edition, that one of the prime exhibits, the Neanderthal "bear-burials", has recently been called into doubt). But mere intuition still has a very large part in Burkert's reconstruction.

A more specific criticism in relation to the Greek material has been made by the specialist J.P. Vernant. For Burkert, sacrifice is murder in disguise: Vernant argues (*Entretiens Hardt*, Vol xxvii) that the function of the "comedy of innocence" in the normal ceremony is precisely to differentiate sacrifice from murder, to prevent feelings of guilt from arising. The horrific ceremonies evoked by Burkert, where sacrifice, murder and cannibalism are confused in the imagination, represent not a norm but deviations from it that gain their effect by dissolving distinctions on which the normal rite insists. This argument dovetails neatly with the common-sense suspicion the sacrifice was too familiar an experience in the ancient world to bear the intense emotional charge that Burkert loads it with. The painful parts will have been less interested in the act of killing than in the infinite expressive modalities, scrupulously listed in surviving small calendars, that it permitted - to say nothing of the feast that followed. These modalities (choice of victim, division of meat, and so on) are therefore the most proper, as well as the most practicable, objects of study.

But even for those who share these reservations *Homo Necans* is a very important book. Burkert's profound learning and power of elegant combination have transformed the factual base on which discussion of many problems rests, and he has injected a new interest and new urgency into the study of Greek myth, Greek ritual and the relation between them.

# Crumbs from the horse's mouth

## Norman Shrapnel

MICHAEL COCKERELL, PETER HENNESSY and DAVID WALKER  
*Sources Close to the Prime Minister: Inside the hidden world of the news manipulators*  
255pp. Macmillan. £9.95.  
0333 348427

"What you can't square, you squash; what you can't squash, you square." The Lloyd George doctrine on news control would find little philosophical dissent in modern government circles, though the presentation would need some going over. The world of the news manipulators has never been more flourishing, according to *Sources Close to the Prime Minister*. The authors argue that the public is being starved of such basic facts of life and death as a democracy needs if it is to have any influence on decision-making, and as journalists busy at the non-receiving end - Michael Cockerell for *Panorama*, Peter Hennessy and David Walker for *The Times* - they cast a baleful eye at a system which facilitates not simply non-information from official quarters but disinformation, misinformation and every other sector of the ever-expanding department of news management.

News is only a small word compared with those, yet the shortage of that plain commodity is bringing the privatization of British government (or so these writers appear to think) nearer every day. Inevitably the finger of scorn is pointed at the parliamentary lobby system, that quaint arrangement whereby selected journalists are allowed to talk to politicians under a strict code of conduct and on mutually advantageous terms not unlike those - so one might judge after reading this book - governing the behaviour of cats and mice. It happens, by a quirk of the calendar more sardonic than anything Orwell could have contrived,

that this is the year when the Westminster lobby is celebrating its centenary. When she spoke at the luncheon marking this occasion the Prime Minister was in relaxed mood, patting her hosts almost playfully while confessing, no doubt to their relief, that they were not always entirely to her taste.

It was thoughtful of her. Unstinted praise from a Prime Minister - any Prime Minister, but particularly the present one - would confirm critics of the lobby system in their worst suspicions. Is a journalist reliable, is he trustworthy? To a politician this means that the fellow can be relied upon to write what he is told and trusted not to reveal what he told him. The convention has an obvious convenience for both participants and provides a lethal armoury for political fighting; but where the public interest lies is often harder to locate.

The cosiness of the system has often been noted. The journalists are encouraged to behave rather like honorary minor MPs without the freedom, a club within a club. Yet for such a system to work at all it needs rigid discipline; self-regulation of a quite stern stamp is the order of the day. The club rules, which they must find embarrassing to see printed here in an appendix (how fortunate for somebody that journalists are not yet civil servants!), suggest some kind of cross between a sergeant's mess and an open prison. (The Foreign Office, which has its own lobby, actually calls the most reliable members "trustees" and rewards them with extra scraps of news.)

The system lives largely on leaks and briefings, which are what leaks are called when they come from the Government. To blame the lobby for all the failings of British political reporting would be naive. It reflects many of the fantasies and delusions of the institution it lives on, and in Westminster, without in any way admitting it, has ceased to be the dominating power-centre it once was. The crucial happenings, the decision-making, tend to take place up the road. But to tell reporters that

they should abandon their leaky ministers and MPs and transfer their attentions to continent Whitehall is merely to invite a thunder of slamming doors. And so we come to the sealed lips which ought, one can't help thinking, to be the emblem of serious contemporary government, the life-and-death part. Leaks are for personal vendetta, party campaigning and other routine headline frivolities. The rest is silence. Both are essential ingredients of news management.

What news management? Mr Bernard Ingham, Mrs Thatcher's press secretary, hasn't noticed any - at least, not where others see it. "The government does not manage the news", he assured the Guild of British Newspaper Editors last year. "You do." It is not recorded whether they looked surprised. Mr Ingham, whom many seem to regard as the current managing director, has been severely criticized for extending the "grey area" between the traditional political neutrality of civil servants and the natural vigour he brings to the task of serving his master. Such a built-in anomaly is no fault of his. You can hardly blame a man for being keen at his job. Mr Ingham appears to have aroused concern by his truculence, but there is no law so far against being truculent back.

If political life has indeed become one long pre-election marathon, Mrs Thatcher's personal skills look by now perfectly capable of meeting the challenge. She has been riding high on the Falklands campaign, which these writers see as the apex of news management and a measure of the official anger that can be expected, when national emotions are in a tense state, to greet any misguided media attempts at objectivity. The complexities of modern conflict (the survivable sort, that is) were well illustrated, quite taking the laugh out of the old music-hall joke about which side the War Office was on. This was no simple struggle between British and Argentines. There were the press and media fighting to be seen and

heard; there was the Ministry of Defence battling for operational secrecy, clashing with Downing Street's need for favourable publicity; with Mr Ian MacDonald winning a quaint personal victory over everybody by announcing the crucial capture of Goose Green a day before it happened.

But those were weird pioneering days of peacetime war in which even the word "censored" could be censored, and the only thing rival government departments could agree about was the rightness of using the lobby system to spread disinformation. What are the lessons, as we nervously peer into a likely future of unabashed full-time electioneering and permanent semi-crisis? We could be buried under white papers and green papers and still, if these observers are to be believed, starved of the knowledge essential for democratic survival. It would no doubt be easy, with the best intentions, to be forced off the truth standard; a plain, unalloyed fact could become the rarest thing in the world, and the most carefully guarded.

This challenging book doesn't blunt its impact with pious optimism. It would like to see an end to the lobby, but the system suits too many influential people for early change to be likely, and "editors prefer a quiet life". It wants to see more journalists hammering on the doors of Whitehall, but would any of them be likely to achieve greater success in this inhospitable territory than an early explorer, Anthony Howard, met with some years ago? The defences appear to be even more formidable now. It wants a Freedom of Information Act; but no government, whether of the right or the left, has shown the least desire for any such thing. Yet if some pressure of public opinion in this area could be demonstrated, perhaps Mrs Thatcher would feel obliged to take notice. After all, the first thing she did on entering the Commons was to launch a private member's bill aimed at furthering, of all things, press freedom.

# Socrates and the Stranger

Julia Annas

STANLEY ROSEN  
*Plato's Sophist*: The drama of original and image  
342pp. Yale University Press. £22.50.  
0300 029640

Ask a Plato scholar why Plato wrote dialogues, and the answer will reveal a major methodological split. For some, Plato is a philosopher who wrote little dramas to engage our interest (why else are they such a good introduction to philosophy?) and to distance the arguments from the author, so that we never forget that they are what matter. For others, however, Plato is speaking through his use of drama, and thus through his manipulation of the characters, as much as through what the characters say.

Stanley Rosen is firmly in the camp of those for whom understanding any move in a Platonic dialogue involves appreciating that it is "perspectival" - that it gains its significance from its place in the whole. Professor Rosen is a sophisticated and learned philosopher, and appreciates that division over the importance of the dialogue form does not line up in any simple way with distinctions between "analytic" and "continental" philosophers, or with philosophical versus literary interests.

Over the last twenty years the *Sophist* has generated a spate of scholarly work, most of which makes two assumptions which Rosen rejects. One is that in this clearly late work the dialogue form is attenuated and no longer doing any dramatic work; the other is that the short section on being and not-being, where we find Plato struggling with problems of nega-

tion, identity and predication, is central to its interpretation. Rosen maintains that the more arid *Sophist* is just as dramatic, though in a subtler way, as the livelier dialogues. And he demotes the central section in two ways: he denies that these are Plato's problems, and he denies that in any case they are problems of identity and predication. He rejects the views of "predicationists" - scholars who see one of Plato's problems as that of distinguishing identity-statements from predication-statements - for reasons which are in essence Cornford's.

Rosen takes very seriously the fact that the main discussion is assigned to an Eleatic Stranger, and thinks it naive to take the Stranger to be Plato's mouthpiece. Rather, Plato is present in both the Stranger and Socrates, who after brief initial appearance is silent; they "represent differing aspects of a unified Platonic teaching and practice". Socrates, who destroys people's beliefs by his questioning, appears to be a sophist. The Stranger has come to "judge" Socrates before the city does; he gives a technical definition which reveals Socrates as indeed a sophist. But the definition fails, as do the Stranger's technical doctrines about images and not-being. The Stranger has tried to understand sophistry the wrong way, by reducing it to a technique; his technical failure stems from his failure to appreciate that philosophy itself is not merely technique. Socrates by his silence refutes the Stranger's attempted judgement; the dialogue as a whole shows us the limitations of formal reasoning when this is divorced from Socratic practice.

Rosen's construction is ingenious, and his commentary is often perceptive on the theme closest to him: the peculiarly philosophical difficulty in trying both to comprehend and define

a subject and to stay alive to the complexity and dependence on experience of our impulse to understand it. As a commentary on Plato it is unlikely to convince. The interpretation of Socrates' supposedly resonant absence, for example, is wholly fanciful (although it would be nice if silence were an effective philosophical refutation). The usual explanation is that Plato is here dealing with a problem alien to Socrates, who would be an inappropriate representative of its refutation. This is a simple, but not a naive, explanation; in the later dialogues as Plato returns to deal with traditional issues, Socrates is often respectfully shelved. Rosen can give no account of why the Stranger is Eleatic, or a "parricide" to Parmenides. In general he can make no sense of the dialogue's pivotal concern with the particular problem of not-being bequeathed by Parmenides; Plato gives a history of his problem before solving it, and Rosen virtually ignores these passages. Although his commentary follows the text section by section, it distorts the structure of Plato's writing in its account of the connection between images and false statement. Rosen touches only in the most incidental way on Parmenides' claim that you cannot think what is not, is; the reader gets no idea of what problem this is, why it is a real problem for Plato, and why he might think he had solved it.

Recent analytical work on the *Sophist* has become ever more fragmented and inconclusive; as the footnotes get longer the reading seems ever more meagre. It neglects some aspects of the dialogue and is often too ready to import modern formalism into areas where interpretation is less than secure. But it does have the merit of seeing Plato in his historical setting, taking up and solving an inherited philosophical problem.

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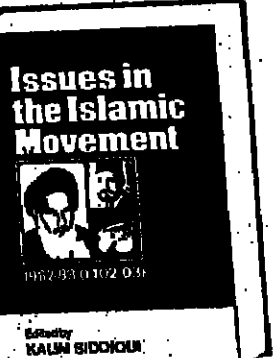
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# Thoughts of a Think Tanker

Noel Annan

LORD ROTHSCHILD  
Random Variables  
238pp. Collins. £12.50.  
0002173344

Some readers of Lord Rothschild's last book told him they hoped his next would be autobiographical. He does not find this easy. Commenting on his public appearances a cousin said, "Can't you smile?" Not apparently in public; but he told the Press Club they should "not be misled by my dead-pan features into thinking I am not laughing from time to time to myself or even, more rarely, at you". So he plays a game with his readers, dropping clues not all that easy to unravel, teasing them to guess what makes him tick. Unlike the outgoing and in-swinging memoirs of other eminent contemporaries, which reveal an appalling emptiness behind the bonhomie, there is a formidable character behind the dead-pan.

Lord Rothschild follows an unpopular calling. He is a technocrat. Highly numerate as he is, he is still coached weekly in mathematics. He cut his teeth as a technocrat supervising the Agricultural Research Council and then was head of research in Royal Dutch Shell. Being a technocrat meant using sophisticated analytical techniques, and judging whether the advice of an expert was sound or worthless. Discretion comes easily to Rothschilds but even he blinked for a moment when, as head of the Think Tank, he was told by Sir Burke Trend that the most he could ever say publicly was that he was "taking an interest in" some matter or other.

Technocrats are often inhuman and out of touch with reality. Unlike the technocrats of the 1930s, such as J. D. Bernal who, taking a dim view of the affairs of this world looked

forward to a purer Marxist existence in the next, Rothschild is on excellent terms with the devil and all his works. Not for nothing did he open the batting for Harrow with Terence Rattigan. (Incidentally, he describes what it was like battling to Larwood.) He knew that to influence events in government you have to work with the mandarins who can throttle you by cutting off your sources of information. But he does not let on how he charmed them.

His readers can learn what it is like to run a Royal Commission on gambling and the odds on being ripped off by one-armed bandits; or how to take apart the fuse of a booby-trap; or how to detect a fake rare book and sue the vendor successfully; or why the value of IQ tests for the intelligent is negligible. They will also learn a few ingenious dodges in dealing with people. In 1944 he was given an assignment by the Préfet of Paris who described it as "assez délicat": it was to request Duff Cooper, the British Ambassador, to stop having an affair with Lulu de Vilmorin. The effect was electrifying.

The longest articles in the book provide a clue to the enigma. Pride is usually held to be a sin. But there is something splendid in the pride which Rothschilds take in their family; the pride in having forced the world to respect them and their race. "Take a chair" said Nathan Mayer, the founder of the English branch of the family, to a visitor, and went on working. After some minutes the visitor said: "I do not think you heard who I am. I am Prince Puckler Muskau." "Take two chairs."

In years to come perhaps someone will tell the story that, being insufficiently one of the Rothschilds, he was not selected to play cricket at Cambridge against Oxford; so he got himself invited to play for a side against the University and took a century off them. Maybe this also turned out to be a legend, such as that of Nathan Mayer making millions out of trading in Consols after Waterloo; or Lionel Rothschild's private secretary begged for £1 million the next day so that the Government could buy the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal. Perhaps it is no accident that there is a commemoration here of Natty, the first Lord Rothschild, who, it is said, refused to take part in underwriting the Titanic on the grounds that so big a ship was likely to sink. But the private family shows again in the description of Edmund, who founded the Rothschild House of Foundation in Israel.

There are some curiously uneven entries from a commonplace book, some noble, wise and others fustian, slick and platitudinous. One *cri de coeur* clearly appealed to the head of the Think Tank. In a letter to Goldstone's private secretary given as 1881, it should have been dated 1882) a minister's private secretary writes that his chief had been wrangling with two other ministers over the devil was decided in Cabinet: his chief was damned if he knows". That could never have happened, of course, in the days of Rothschild or the Think Tank. Or — as Lord Rothschild would say — could it?

## On watch among the phonies

Harold Beaver

ROBERT KEITH MILLER

Mark Twain  
234pp. New York: Ungar. \$14.50.  
0804426279

LOUIS J. BUDD

Our Mark Twain: The making of his public personality  
266pp. University of Pennsylvania Press.  
\$21.95.  
081227881X

The young Sam Clemens was enthralled by fraud: by the card sharps and undertakers and vagrant hucksters along the Mississippi. His very pen-name was a fraud, stolen (he claimed) from one Captain Isaiah Sellers of New Orleans. Impostors crowd his fiction from "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" to *King Leopold's Soliloquy*. The comic radiance of fraud and the tragic fraudulence of such strategies, in all their entwined and corroding humour, were to become the commanding themes of his fiction.

For fiction itself was a fraud; and the ultimate con-man, for this renegade Southerner, was Sir Walter Scott. He damns him in *Life on the Mississippi* for "his enchantments". He even named a foundering steamboat after him in *Huckleberry Finn* as if the great novelist were nothing but a sham-picturesque and sentimentally seductive dream-boat. Yet Twain, throughout his life, remained nervously unsure of himself and easily taken in, just as young Huck was taken in by the Duke and the Dauphin, or young Sam (the cub pilot) by a night watchman who turns out to be "a low, vulgar, ignorant, sentimental, half-witted humbug, an untraveled native of the wilds of Illinois".

Sam's world, like Huck's, was all sham. Those imposing fluted columns with their Corinthian capitals adorning Southern mansions, for example, turn out to be "made of white pine, and painted". A dish of fruit in the parlour (as Huck too was to discover) proves to be "all done in plaster, rudely, or in wax, and painted to resemble the originals — which they don't". But the greatest impostor of all, as Robert Keith Miller observes in *Mark Twain*, is the great Mississippi itself: that "crookedest river in the world", continuously doubling on itself and changing its course. Its very beauty is illusory, seen like a Claude or Ruysdael at sunset, with "the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous". Such "signs and symbols" conceal their dangers:

This sun means that we are going to have a wind tomorrow; that floating log means that the river is rising . . . that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights . . .

The need for such sly semiology, such unceasing watchfulness, accounts for that uneasy threat in Mark Twain's landscapes. It is a lonely watch. The landscapes are as lonely as de Chirico's permanently sunny, somnolent stage-sets:

After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowning in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the wall, pigs loafing along the sidewalk . . . two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levees" . . . and the fragrant, warm dream asleep in the shadows of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along . . . a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one.

Young Sam remains lonely, as the "noontide heat" (in *Tom Sawyer*) is traced to a "pervading silence and sense of loneliness", or the Phelps farm (in *Huckleberry Finn*), drooping with flies, seems "so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone".

Robert Keith Miller's study successfully evokes such themes. The curt demands of the series it is published in entail a certain drill; but Miller, while going through his paces for raw beginners, engages with all Twain's most representative work. To have written an introductory text, so alert to the wealth of recent scholarship, about such a meteorically popular yet

even now suspect career, is a considerable achievement.

Louis J. Budd in *Our Mark Twain* concentrates on the career. He has spent a lifetime with Twain, delving into the Mark Twain Papers in the Bancroft Library at Berkeley. His book is too verbose perhaps, but with its wealth of contemporary illustrations it marks out more clearly than ever before the steadily sustained, amazing apotheosis of Twain's public personality. Not for nothing was he called, by William Dean Howells, the Lincoln of American literature. For, like a statesman, he took a considerable hand in the shaping of his own reputation.

In this cultivation of an image, as we would say, he was really the first of the moderns. One obituary observed that "not even Sarah Bernhardt surpassed him in making himself of continued interest to the public". George Bernard Shaw developed a similar vein of clowning and posturing and self-promotion. Both were showmen. Both were celebrities of a newspaper age. Both were stars of public platform routines. Introduced as one of the "great" authors, Twain drily remarked that "they have a sad habit of dying off. Chaucer is dead, Spenser is dead, so is Milton, so is Shakespeare, and I am not feeling very well myself". That, like so many other of his *bons mots*, became famous in time.

All this was grist to the publicity machine. If there was one thing Twain appreciated, after all, it was a confidence trick; if there was one thing he understood, it was confidence men; and, like another P. T. Barnum, he fed the national greed for plugs and impostures. His very stage entrances and exits were part of the performance: coming on with a sidelong, awkward stride or a funny little shuffle and often hippity-bopping off the stage. His verbal mannerisms became a trademark: impassive, diffident drawing, even bumbling. He developed a deadpan style, punctuated by mock perplexity at the laughter which it evoked. He openly confessed that he plotted a "little finely acted stumbling and stammering for a word". He delighted in telling reporters about his ploys, "because he not only counted on the national tolerance for clever imposture", as Louis J. Budd writes, "but understood that audiences could cheerfully gather for something they suspected might be an exaggeration or even a masquerade".

Such damping of his natural ebullience was in artful contrast to the florid oratory then current. He manipulated his audiences and let them share in the knowledge of their own manipulation. He had manipulated them from the start in publishing his books by means of door-to-door advance subscriptions. There was a ruthless aggression in all this. The very mark of his style (since *The Innocents Abroad*) had been an irreverent and impudent undermining of decorum. As he himself was to put it in *Is Shakespeare Dead?* "I cannot call to mind a single instance where I have ever been irreverent, except toward the things which were sacred to other people."

That was the paradox. He was "a consummate actor" (in Budd's phrase), so professionally good at openness. His sly and genial act — itself a parody of Victorian sincerity — was used for the exposing of sham and debunking of humbug. He struck a phony posture, in other words, to attack phony posturing. As he told his Yale audience in 1888, on accepting the honorary degree of master of arts: it was the humorist's calling to deride all shams and "nobilities, and privileges and all kindred swindles". (The bogus and swindling Tom Driscoll, incidentally, of *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*, was to be made a product of Yale University.)

This confidence in mock self-exposure never deserted him. All audiences were gullible. What Twain called, with open derision, his "patent adjustable speech" was eventually extended to the more intimate occasions of his life. After the painful death of his daughter Susy, he dramatized his deepest feelings in print. He had begun to live his emotional life in public. He had established the right to a kind of universal intimacy. On his triumphant return from voluntary exile in 1900 (after the fiasco of his bankruptcy) he could josh and wisecrack with the reporters:

"My editor asked me to come to the station and see you."

"That's nice of your editor. Run along and tell him that you did."

"How many cigars do you smoke a day?"

"As many as I can — one at a time as it rules."

His daughter Clara finally wondered how he "could manage to have an opinion" for the press "on every incident, accident, invention or disease in the world". His farewell visit to Hannibal in 1902 was followed by a press squad aiming their cameras at his "boyhood home" and "childhood sweetheart". A few years later he let journalists, with their notebooks and cameras, into his bedroom. He must be the first celebrity ever to be photographed in his wrinkled pyjamas.

For Twain himself was an old newspaperman who remained good copy and never lost the good will of the press corps, whether as lecturer, victim of bankruptcy, or finally man-about-New York in his inevitable white suits. As he proudly told the *Baltimore Sun* in 1907:

I guess I am beyond dispute the oldest journalist in the country, for, ever since the time I first began the business with my little paper in Hannibal, Mo., I have been in newspaper work, with scarcely any interval whatever, in one form or another — if not actively writing or making material for the press, then figuring in interviews or as the subject of newspaper comment.

It was his infatuation with a typesetter, after all, that had bankrupted him.

That white "doutcareadam suit" (worn all the year round after 1906) became the theatrical mark of his nonconformity. While he made his own *persona* increasingly a bait or decoy, his subversive challenge grew steadily more virulent. It was not just faking he now went after; it was the imperialists and big-shot politicians. He was a connoisseur of every form of ruthless aggression. But with the paradoxical pose, the laughter also vanished. He handed out press releases (as we would call them) on King Leopold. He scandalized a vast audience at the Waldorf Astoria, at a dinner in honour of the young Winston Churchill, by stating that South Africa and the Philippines had created a "kin in sin". The dire "To the Person Sitting in

Darkness" (1901) and "The War Prayer" (1905) followed, condemning military intervention in China, South Africa and the Philippines. Best remembered is his crusade against atrocities in the Belgian Congo. But he also became a staunch supporter of suffragists (American style) and responded to dozens of causes from the Tuskegee Institute to victims of the San Francisco earthquake or Russian pogroms.

Mark Twain rose head and shoulders above predecessors, like Artemus Ward, or successors, like Will Rogers. He had been legitimized as a Great Author. The uniform collected edition of 1896-97 had proved that. The censureless British adulation — from Kipling's interview in the *New York Herald* to the honorary D Litt from Oxford — confirmed it. Such publicity blazed the trail for younger generations of promotion-hungry authors from Scott Fitzgerald to Mailer; and like them, Twain specialized in never looking a bookworm. But his was the regal touch. As a contemporary (quoted by Louis J. Budd) recalled:

It was one of the secrets of his immense personal effect that he never felt nor looked like a scholar or a thoughtful literary person, but rather like a man of affairs — erect, handsome, healthy, debonair — in his earlier years like a prosperous ranchman, later like a financier, a retired field-marshal, an ambassador, or, as his friends would have it, like a king.

The seven stories which in 1905 made up Willa Cather's first book of fiction, *The Troll Garden* (176pp. University of Nebraska Press. £12.50. 0 8032 1417 0) were included in the posthumous *Collected Shorter Fiction, 1892-1912* (1970), but James Woodress has now produced a variorum edition, with introduction, notes, textual commentary, emendations and a table of revisions. For this edition, Woodress has collated a number of copies of *The Troll Garden*, including one marked by Cather herself. Some of the changes only involved altering "which" to "that", while others were more substantial. The stories were, he writes, produced after "her Henry James phase".

## Buffer statements

Roy Foster

A.J.P. TAYLOR  
An Old Man's Diary  
155pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0241112478

The public diary form is admirably adapted to A.J.P. Taylor in his chosen persona of crusty old buffer: he can be didactic, equivocating and self-deprecating all at once. "I had grave qualms of conscience, only to learn that I had been right after all. This often happens to me." The politics of being deliberately exasperating, known to all who have grandparents, is here carried to the level of art. The most bizarre conclusions follow impeccable chains of argument; and where Taylor is right, it is often for flagrantly wrong reasons. He is having his fun.

A little of this every fortnight or so in *The Listener* or the *London Review of Books* (in

which the contents of this book first appeared) is one thing; a whole book of it might be expected to be quite another. But curiously, the tone does not become wearying, and there is considerable interest in monitoring the old crustacean's reactions to the first appearance of the revived CND, or the Hitler Diaries. As ever, he is excellent on the self-inflations of the historical profession; he pointedly finds a straightforward study of English historians "one of the funniest books I have ever read".

The personality which Taylor created for his autobiography is polished up for these pieces, twinkling and snapping. In many ways, it is a pleasanter self-portrait, probably because the context is intentionally inconsequential. A deliberately revealing note is struck when discussing Shaw (straight-facedly described as "our greatest playwright since Ben Jonson"): "A further merit about *Heartbreak House* is that it has no message."

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## In search of shelter

Andrew Motion

HALLAM TENNYSON  
The Haunted Mind  
238pp. André Deutsch. £12.95.  
0233976183

Towards the end of this autobiography Hallam Tennyson tells us that it began life under the title "Man on a Crossing". His intention, he says, was to provide an "elegiac celebration" of the past, and an examination of the tensions which comprise his character. But as the writing progressed, so his aims were changed — partly by the cathartic effects of self-analysis, and partly by the realization that its benefits were offset by an accompanying sense of vulnerability: "living at a cross-roads is uncomfortable, even, in the end, alarming; and, as a result, much of the last part of what I have written looks more like a search for shelter than an effort at celebration. Not that I have found much shelter." The existing title, then, carries a greater weight than its obvious meaning. It registers a wish for protection as well as an admission of anxiety, and it implies a resilient faith in the value of doubt. His grandfather, the poet, would have approved.

So would anyone who is at all sympathetic to a self-scrutiny as intense as *The Haunted Mind*. The book is an unflinching account of Mr Tennyson's inner life in general and his homosexuality in particular, and the conclusions it reaches are as hard-won as the circumstances which precipitated them were complex. It is, in fact, the sort of autobiography which blurbists usually credit (and do here) with "courage": always awkwardly honest, and often disturbed by guilt. These are appealing features, usually, and readers who don't find them absolutely rewarding are likely to feel at least a twinge of guilt themselves. But it cannot be denied that the price paid for the book's virtues is uncomfortably high, since its honesty — for all their pain — registers a kind of pride, and its braveries — for all the suffering they involve — convey a kind of pleasure.

This might not be as offputting as it is, had Tennyson allowed more space for those parts of his life which exist in terms of external event. His career in the BBC was, after all, a distinguished one, and brought him into contact with several people of whom we pine to know more — Louis MacNeice, for one. His discretion about the world around him is partly explained by a justifiable desire not to hurt people's feelings, but the opportunity this gives him to consult his own amounts at times to an obsession. The narrative of his life's actual events is in-

variably handled with summary speed and sometimes with positive haste. In the opening account of his parents and childhood, for example, most people (apart from his mother, of whom he was "in considerable awe") and his dents remain a shadowy background against which he plays the drama of his psychological disclosures: his brooding on "a tendency to experience life, at least in part, as a system of deprivation", and his discovery of the coming impulses to which he has remained subject. "The reconciliation of sensuality with the life of the spirit; of powerful sexual urges with decent human relations; of socialism with its demands remain a shadowy background against which he plays the drama of his psychological disclosures: his brooding on "a tendency to experience life, at least in part, as a system of deprivation", and his discovery of the coming impulses to which he has remained subject. 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# Seeing the light

John Clute

MARGE PIERCY  
*Fly Away Home*  
446pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.  
£8.95.  
07011 39269

As *Fly Away Home* opens, Daria Walker is about to celebrate her forty-third birthday. The present her husband Ross gives her is a peignoir. It is too small for her. No reader of commercial romantic fiction could miss the point. She suspects nothing, but the rest of us know that Ross, or more likely his secretary, has muddled up which gift is intended for the wife, and which for the mistress.

This is the first great flaw of *Fly Away Home*. Clearly intended by her creator as an exemplary, Everywoman figure, Daria simply fails to understand the trashy plot Marge Piercy has constructed in order to bare her life to us. Proper denizens of commercial romantic novels know the meaning of a wrong-size lacy black peignoir. They know the meaning of mysterious phone-calls, mysterious absences, irrational rages, coded notes, sudden new tricks at love-making after months of sleeping separately. Daria hasn't a notion, though as a popular cookbook writer and television personality she can be presumed to have ventured into the world outside her affluent Boston home.

"You pretend you don't catch on to things you don't want to notice", her sister tells her, but by this point her incapacity to understand the world—the story—she inhabits amounts to near-lunacy. For by this point the reader will have noticed not only that Ross is a ruthless male chauvinist, an adulterer, a liberal turned very conservative indeed, a shyster lawyer, and a jogger, but also that he is deeply involved in murder and arson. This is the second great flaw of the novel. While Daria clearly doesn't belong to the world of genre fiction, Ross could easily have stepped out of one of John D.

MacDonald's sour exposés of the marriage between business and crime in darkest Florida.

Eventually Ross shows up at the family home to cart away its valuable antiques, while Daria watches bemused. The next day his hired arsonist burns the place down, and she barely escapes with her life. The penny drops at last. The man she has lived with for twenty-two years is a figment. Out of the monster she now recognizes she screws an adequate divorce settlement, and through a protest group trying to save a neighbourhood he has been putting to the torch she manages to get him arrested, tried and convicted of arson and other crimes. Such are the consequences, one might be tempted to deduce from Piercy's forthright feminist stance throughout this book, of tangling with a woman who has seen the light.

Though Piercy begs one to caricature her novel in this fashion, it would be unfair to do so. As the protagonist of a novel, Daria is a silly creation, being simply too good, and too dumb, for the world of fiction. But there are moments when her clear, humane decency comes ungargled through Ms Piercy's elbowing prose, we forget the risible corkscrews of the plot, and feel the presence of a real person deep within the text, crying to get out. For there is reality here: Boston; Daria, and her two difficult, believable daughters; the joys of cooking; the solidarity of neighbours standing together against lawyers and property developers and arson. We are left with a sense of engagement with the decency of human lives, when opened to the eye. That could be the polemical heart of *Fly Away Home*. Certainly Ross and the plot he juggles fade away like a chimera at the novel's close. Some folk remain.

## Acts of repossession

Jim Crace

DAVID MALOUF  
*Harland's Half Acre*  
230pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.  
£8.95.  
07011 27376

In the closing pages of *Harland's Half Acre*, David Malouf offers what can be taken as an Australian Writer's Reply to Just Criticism. Frank Harland, an artist, and this novel's eccentric and dispossessed protagonist, has died. His bruised and celebrated body is whirled away by helicopter from his spartan offshore retreat just as the final pieces are assembled for a first major "Retrospective". Phil Vernon, Harland's lawyer and friend, is distressed by the Exhibition: all the "raw edges" of the unconstrained, Nolanesque canvases have been "squared off behind frames". Their gathering now in a clean, well-lighted place made the paintings even harder to read", comments Vernon. "Carefully arranged by experts to illustrate a line of development, a phase, or the variation over decades of theme, they falsified truth by creating a pattern that was too orderly, too whole. Mess, that was what was missing, and it was essential."

Vernon's reservations match Malouf's own evident mistrust of conventional narrative, or of fiction that is chronological and representational in manner, orderly and integrated in structure. Such "carefully arranged" narratives impose a grid-like pattern on lives which, Malouf suggests, are comprehensible only through their irregularity. He prefers to dislocate his narrative logic, to break thematic focus, to separate his colours on the page like some prose pointillist. He prefers "mess".

The irony is that Malouf most excels at conventional story-telling. His opening chapters are uncharacteristically systematic yet stunningly artful evocations of Queensland and Queenslanders. The Harland acres ("lush country but of the green, subtropical kind, with sawmills in untidy paddocks") are squandered with "extravagant folly" through drink, gambling, debt and neglect. By 1918 Frank's widower father, Clem, is reduced to "grubbing a livelihood from odd patches of what was once a princely estate". Frank is farmed out to Aunt Else and Uncle Fred in the wind and frosts of the Great Dyiding Range, where "the grass suddenly flattened and flowed uphill" before

# Per Astria ad Arde

Galen Strawson

A. K. DEWDNEY  
*The Planiverse*: Computer contact with a two-dimensional world  
272pp. Picador. £7.95 (paperback, £2.95).  
0330 283332

A hundred years ago the reverend Edwin Abbott published *Flatland*; two-dimensional worlds have been a fictional reality ever since. An American logician called Charles Hinton transmuted Abbott's tabletop world into a two-dimensional disc-planet called Astria, in *An Episode of Flatland*, published in 1907, and in 1965 a Dutch physicist called Dionys Burger produced *Sphereland*, combining Abbott's and Hinton's worlds into an infinitely-thin-skin-of-a-balloon world. A. K. Dewdney, a professor of Computer Science both in real life and as a character in his own fiction, combines Burger and Hinton in turn: *The Planiverse* as a whole is like the two-dimensional surface of an expanding balloon, but all the real action takes place on the rim of Arde, a single disc-planet in the expanding planiverse.

Fictional Dewdney is a bit of a sap, with easy access to that alarming dimension of sentimentality that seems to be reserved exclusively for scientists; but he has quite an interesting problem. He and his students have written a program called "2D WORLD"; it models a disc-planet called Astria, which they have embellished with land, sea, weather and various primitive organisms like "throgs" and "throg-hunters". It works fine; but then it gets taken over: YNDRD appears on the compu-

rain and where, in the winter, "a crystal bud appeared [on a leaking pipe] and grew each day until there was a flower". His disposition breeds a giddy infatuation with his absent father: it seems "that he had had no mother at all but had been born out of some aspect of his father that was itself feminine; not in being soft or yielding, but in being, quite simply, powerful, and so full of animal warmth that it must inevitably give birth to something other than itself". Frank embarks on an enervating, life-long quest for his broken family and, finally, for the lost acres. His early, untutored sketches of the low hills and bunyah pines around his father's patch are his "first act of repossession".

In some fine and focused prose Malouf has assembled his ingredients—then, stubbornly, he fails to mix the cocktail. Linchpin characters who have engaged and intrigued us in the early chapters (Clem Harland, for example) break rank and become faces in the crowd before the conundrums which they represent have been probed or resolved. Personalities metamorphose between chapters. The uneven pace, unspecified chronology and shifting location become disruptive; the firm line of the introductory sections disintegrates into sketches, anecdotes and cameos. Frank Harland bounds like a wallaby from rigid, obsessive boy to down-at-heel "swaggie", from eccentric artist to corpse (of which there is "nothing left... but the pong") with too little of the why and wherefore, the how and when. Still the writing is masterfully evocative—but it fails to build to a cogent narrative.

These imperfections of design have become a hallmark of Malouf's fiction. The best of his four earlier novels—*Johnny and Fly Away Peter*—suffer from a similar inability (or unwillingness) to harvest the crop which has been so skilfully sown. Had Malouf been persuaded to allow fuller licence to his conventional draughtsmanship skills and to resist the temptations of "mess", *Harland's Half Acre* might have counted as one of the finest English-language novels of the year. A pattern, that is what is missing, and it is essential.

Closing date for entries for the 1984 Dylan Thomas Award, which this year is open to short-story writers only (the 1983 Award of £1,000 went to the poet Peter Reading), is July 27. Details available from: The Dylan Thomas Award, The Poetry Society, 21 Earls Court Square, London SW5 9DE.

ter's screen, two-legged, four-armed, two-dimensional Yendred, whose head can move from left to right (but only through the vertical position—of course). Young Yendred is a naïf, and he lives on Arde beneath a sun called Shems in a country called Punizla. (Dewdney is not the first to use Arabic words for science-fictional purposes—and for earth, *shems* for sun, *hadd* for fish, *hadd* for a metal. Frank Herbert did it in *Dune*, and others have done it since. In a curious manifestation of what Edward Said calls "orientalism"—the Arab as *prêt-à-porter* alien.)

Yendred wants to quit Punizla for Vanizla, the east, where the old religious traditions are respected and a mystical tradition still flourishes. "I THE KNOWLEDGE OF BEYOND SEEK. WHAT THE KNOWLEDGE BEYOND THOUGHT IS?" he expresses it in his charming if Germanic English. He has a journey to go, and his wild progress dramatizes the problems and solutions of life on the rim of a 2-D disc. Dewdney and his students are accordingly fascinated. They neglect their research work. A bad brings unwelcome publicity, and they opt to contact Yendred only at night, going about their daily business like bleary-eyed video game junkies.

Acknowledging help from scientists and 20 amateurs around the world, Dewdney describes life on Arde with great resourcefulness. Houses are all underground and are entirely trapdoor—for you can't walk round a house; you lack a third dimension to manoeuvre in. In two Nsana meet, there are conventions governing which of them lies down to let the other walk over him. In Punizla, those travelling west (north and south simply do not exist although up and down do). Manners are deteriorating, however, and "young Ardeans frequently topple oldsters in order to walk over them". Like us, Nsana have quarrels, animosity and battles, but when two armies meet only two at a time can fight. Tactics are accordingly simple: Each army puts its champions at the front of the fighting queue and hopes for the best.

One begins to understand the oddness of flatness. One realizes that the visual world of Nsana must consist entirely of a single ending line, subdivided into colours and shades, dark and light. This is something that neither Dir Jisbo, Punizla's greatest artist, although he can conceive of nothing else; for it makes abstract art impossible.

I RANDOM FORMS CREATE IN THE HOPE OF SOMETHING WHICH LIKE NOTHING ELSE LOOKS OBTAINING, BUT ALWAYS A SUGGESTIVE FORM OBTAIN. IT MOST FRUSTRATING IS.

BUT OF YOUR FAMOUS PAINTINGS WHAT OF YOUR 'FORMLESS FORM NUMBER SEVEN' WHAT?

FAILURES. ALL FAILURES. FORMLESS FORM NUMBER SEVEN ME PERSONALLY REMINDS OF A RA NIETD WITH A STEAM ENGINE LOVE MAKING. ALL FAILURES.

After many trials, Yendred makes it to Vanizla and meets his mystic. He breaks contact with Dewdney and his Earthlings and goes on into the beyond. Six learned appendices on 2-D science and technology follow his departure—and in fact the whole momentum of this book derives from the somewhat didactic ingenuity with which Ardean rockets, balloons, brains, clocks, rivers(!), biological organisms, hinges and steam engines are devised, depicted and described. One gets a certain sense of a reality existing independently of the author's mind—precisely because the fictional invention is so very tightly constrained by the exigencies of description in two dimensions.

Presumably two-dimensional matter could not in fact exist, for a two-dimensional world is not just infinitely thin, it has no thickness at all (if that is really something different). But two-dimensional science is flourishing here on earth. John Mamin, for example, has recently contributed a "fascinating paper on the Dirac delta function, noting that it develop[s] a curious tall when propagated as a two-dimensional wave"; only last month the John Locke Lecturer at Oxford was envisaging "a stack of Flatlands in three-space"; and the VDUs are showing late across America the three-dimensional

# The service sector

Christopher Driver

GERALD MARS and MICHAEL NICOD  
*The World of Waiters*  
150pp. Allen and Unwin. £10.95.  
004 301178 0

Among the last people to notice that we have been moving from a manufacturing to a service economy are researchers into working lives. This book, an exception to the rule that horny-handed trade-union members hog the monographs as they do the media, has been written by two anthropologists. The title of Gerald Mars' previous book, *Cheats at Work*, is prominently displayed underneath the title of this one, which should ensure that soup will be spilt down his jacket at any restaurant he cares to visit this year.

Michael Nicod, best known to food critics as Mary Douglas's collaborator in exploring the structural symbolism of the British biscuit, more recently got himself employed as a waiter in five British hotels of ascending status, including a couple of anonymous but well-known London ones where he may, for all I know, have had the grim pleasure of assessing the present reviewer as a tipping prospect. Service charge or no service charge, instant up-summing on these lines is still the first duty of a waiter, once he has doffed his individuality with his street clothes and become a student of behaviour, albeit dependent on his wits rather than on a research grant. This professional stance must have helped Nicod to fade into his chosen background easily: every waiter is an Erving Goffmann in embryo, the observer whom no one but the occasional restaurant guide inspector actually observes.

It is astounding how people will continue talking as a waiter bends over them, often speaking of the most intimate and important matters that they would not have the world know for all the money they possess.

That remark from Dave Marlowe's *Coming, Stri*, a vivid autobiography with a foreword by Desmond MacCarthy, was published in 1937. Mars and Nicod's otherwise enterprising bibliography scarcely stretches back as far, except to the overworked Orwell, but an industry as deeply conservative as catering deserves the longer perspective. Even the argot of the trade evolves slowly: "stiff" for a non-tipper was current in the 1970s as in the 1930s, though it would now sound old-fashioned for an actual corpse.

Marlowe, who waited on transatlantic liners and in New York, as well as on the British gin-and-gentility circuit, had plenty of opportunity to compare the easy-going democracy of American dining-rooms with the buttoned-up protection of personal space so typical of British encounters between customer and staff. Hostility between waiters and chefs is more international and timeless—a kind of referred pain which vents behind the service-door the feelings that cannot be expressed to the diners, much as the kitchen flue vents the noxious odours of the restaurant itself into the street.

Another constant, in spite of galloping bureaucracy in hotel management, is the surprising individualism of the bargains that are struck before a catering job is established: formally between waiter and employer, and later informally between junior and senior men (and women), to make room for "knocking off" of food and whole meals without overstepping the mark and giving proprietors an excuse to screw down the sources of leakage.

This pattern of paternalism and venality was doubtless well established in the black suit economy of clubs and ordinaries well before grand hotels and restaurants rose with the railway in the mid-nineteenth century. But internal power relationships can change with time. For instance, in the age when a gentleman would have died rather than admit to knowledge of how a dish should be cooked, and when a lady was used to hiring and firing servants in her own household every month of the year, dining out in the West End and by the seaside was preoccupied with *bella figura* to a point that almost precluded interest in the food.

The *maitre d'hôtel* was the person who counted—the "front" man as he would now be called. Waiters learnt the craft on the job, by "sitting next to Nellie". It was a harsh school, with many drop-outs. Even in the Berkeley

Hotel of the 1970s, not the 1920s, I recall a junior waiter querying an ambiguous drink order, only to have the customer—my host—repeat it in the same words, but louder. "Only way they'll learn, dear boy." But at the top, like the hospital nursing which it closely resembles both functionally and atmospherically, the craft was worth learning and the pickings worth waiting for. Generous (or timid) customers often made it unnecessary to imitate Nicod's West End colleague who ran a couple of restaurants of his own with the sides of smoked salmon and chunks of fillet steak he taped to the inside of his trousers before going home at night.

Nowadays, though, waiters' morale has sunk. The chef is the star, and the head waiter has made a bubble reputation by marrying strawberries to guinea-fowl may be found ruling the kitchens where Soyier or Escoffier once presided. With a name and a television reputation to protect—and while it is easy to cook effectively on television, it is impossible to reproduce there the impersonal interaction that makes good waiting—chefs have worked out how to prevent half-trained waiters from ruining their food: plates are designed in the kitchen and merely handed round, with not a flower out of place. A pretty example of in-

house de-skilling.

As a book, *The World of Waiters* is disjointed, like most collaborations. Its pursuit of the kind of work that Jason Dilton did on bakery roundsmen in *Part-time Crime* sorts uneasily with its transactional analysis of dietary systems à la Mary Douglas. But Nicod's *aperçus* of his temporary colleagues are worth having. (There is little reason to suppose that restaurant settings would differ markedly from hotel ones, except in inaccessibly ethnic contexts and in small places where class relationships entangle divertingly, as when temporarily impoverished or professionally ambitious upper-crust girls are found serving tables for prosperous lower-middle proprietors.)

Suggestive lines of thought abound, both at the margins of the book's remit and at the centre. Just because the British—still—generally take the alimentary function for granted, there is no reason to suppose us any slower than the French or Melanesians to signify social tensions through food and drink as the experience of a family solicitor with whom we were discussing this material well illustrates. What constantly surprised him, when talking about marital breakdowns with his clients, was the number of instances he came across where the husband rejected his meal, and the relationship it signified, by feeding his food to the family pet.

(Has anyone attempted to correlate the

burgeoning popularity and expense of pet-keeping with the incidence of marital breakdown?)

Central to the book are the questions of boundary and social distance between waiter and customer. "A waiter may advise, suggest, influence, persuade, badger, or cajole—but he must never appear to dictate from inside the boundary." (Mars and Nicod do not explore what this traditionally feminine role does to the waiter's private life.) It takes unusual ingenuity for a waiter or waitress to "get the jump", as the authors put it, by finding inoffensive ways to leap or rupture the boundary dividing the server from the served.

One waitress, when serving a family with a young child, would often adopt the following strategy. As soon as the family were seated and waiting to give their order, she would approach their table and then deliberately knock over the child's drink. In doing this, she would make it appear to be the child's fault. She would then take the initiative in sorting out the melee this caused, and at the same time put the whole family under an obligation to her. "Don't worry, he's only a baby—I can easily get him another."

The authors end by suggesting that the hotel labourer is worthy of his hire, plus at least ten per cent. Writers, alas, get no tips from grateful readers, but at least they can safely be asked for a second helping.

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John Clute



# Sentences beyond number

Yorick Wilks

D. TERENCE LANGENDOEN and PAUL M. POSTAL  
The Vastness of Natural Languages  
189pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.  
0631 13461 1

The second word of this book's title will mislead browsers, but precisely expresses the claim that Terence Langendoen and Paul Postal wish to make: that the number of sentences of any natural language is not merely infinite, but some larger transfinite number and, for good measure, any of those sentences can also be transfinite in length. The reader should not draw back in alarm from such claims: they are not the product of new or startling research, but rather the leftovers of the Chomskyan movement in formal language studies. For some reason his critics have never been able to understand, Chomsky always took his own claim of the infinity of the sentences of any natural language very seriously indeed. And what Langendoen and Postal have done in this monograph is to spice up and re-serve those leftovers, moving the claims to more arresting and outrageous levels. But the important issues remain what they were when Chomsky first set them out nearly thirty years ago: are they true in any interesting sense and, if true, do they matter?

The crux of the issue is the relationship of languages as we speak them to the formal languages of mathematics, and whether it is cheating or fair play to bring them together. Chomsky was in the great tradition of wanting to do so, whereas psychologists and humanists generally have found the connection forced and misleading. The point at issue can be put in the simplest terms: there is known to be an infinite number of whole numbers and, tautologically, logicians call them denumerably infinite. Denumerable infinity is only the lowest grade of infinity; what it means is that you can

go on saying the next number for ever, or rather (and this is the humanist's point) not really for ever because you inevitably say your last number, even if you have devoted your life to nothing else.

Linking that logical matter to a real language is a standard trick: "Twenty-five is a number" is obviously a sentence of English. Since there is an infinity of whole numbers, there must be an infinity of such sentences. QED. There is another trick that follows this one, in coffee-bars where such things are bandied about: it has been known since Cantor that the so-called real numbers (think of them as decimal fractions of any length) are rather more numerous than the integers, or whole numbers. They are not only infinite but transfinite, in the sense that they could not be enumerated by a computer running for ever. Cantor showed this by a trick called the *Diagonalfahren* that can be recreated on the back of an old envelope. It shows that there will always be at least one more decimal fraction than there are whole numbers, and since those are infinite, the decimals or reals must be transfinite. The linkage to sentences is equally easy: "I will be home between 1pm and 20.333 minutes past" is again a sentence of English, or just about. Cantor's result shows that there is a transfinite number of sentences referring to such times.

The reader may wish to draw breath here and wonder what consequences follow about the nature of language, mind and brain. Langendoen and Postal do not use the examples above; I have used the old familiar ones. In fact, they want to go much further than this, and to argue that the sentences of a language are more transfinite than even the real numbers. But we can pause here, and consider their claims on the basis of what has been shown so far.

Both the above illustrations rely on putting numbers directly into sentences and then claiming that languages must therefore have whatever formal properties the number systems have. Chomsky made this move years ago

in order to treat languages as abstract platonic objects with properties over and above any they might gain from their psychological or physiological embodiment in human beings. That was the heart of his insistence that infinitely long sentences were genuine sentences even though no one could ever say one. But, and this is unlike Langendoen and Postal, he stopped at the proof that there are denumerably infinitely many sentences in a language, because he retained the belief that his own systems of grammar were present in human heads, and that that would be the sort of infinity of sentences they would produce. This turned out to be a handy belief for him to retain, since recent work has shown that languages not having that property probably cannot be learned. In going further, as they do, Langendoen and Postal have pulled a neat pupil's trick on their old master: if languages are transfinite, and not just infinite, then the grammars in our heads cannot be Chomskyan. And they seem unworried, just as Plato would have been, by the consequences that languages are transfinite objects, existing over and above all computation or finite process.

What can one say to this? Perhaps one could point out quietly that the whole game relies on very special sentences that may not be central to languages at all; and here readers of the *TLS* would be witnesses as impressive as professors of linguistics. Perhaps those special sentences

could be cordoned off from the rest of a language in some way. After all, many languages have no words for big numbers; are they then not languages at all? More formally, any actual computer or brain can construct any finite part of a transfinite number system that happens to need. Does it then matter if it cannot cover all such sentences? Suppose that evolution has found it better to develop a brain that is a make-do-and-mend organ of just that sort, and one of no discernible mathematical type. Is that not a more likely state of affairs, given how small a part numbers have played in the long evolutionary history of human language? How could so tiny a tail wag so large and subtle a dog?

But the sky-pilots of Cognitive Science are very clear on this: we must choose which abstract type of machine the brain is, and then that all they want follows. Questions about angels were just as pressing to very clever men not so long ago, but those concerned with the nature of the real world, with what processes might account for the subtlety of actual sentences, might well keep their gaze a little lower.

The arguments in this book are not new, but it is good to have them all collected in a single monograph. It will do no harm to those with common-sense, computational, psychological or any other humanistic view of languages to stretch themselves against the arguments of Langendoen and Postal.

## Signs without end

Rebecca Posner

UMBERTO ECO  
Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language  
242pp. Macmillan. £20 (paperback, £7.95).  
0333 36354 X

"Brilliant", used to describe this collection of essays by Umberto Eco, smacks of what he calls "institutionalized catatonia" — the "dead" metaphor. Yet it is a wholly appropriate epithet, in that the light the author sheds on the topics tackled is often more dazzling than lucid. Eco wittily and enchantingly develops themes often touched on in his previous works, but he delves deeper into their complex nature, glorying in their intricacy, and shunning attempts to "tame the labyrinth" by oversimplification, or indeed, "deconstruction".

As the first-ever occupant of a Chair of Semiotics (at Bologna), Eco has sometimes been accused of imperialistic aspirations: for him, semiotics, the theory of signs, provides the methodology for study not only of communication and meaning systems, but of all cultural phenomena. In this new work Eco seeks to extend even further the range of his chosen discipline in his claim that "a general semiotics is nothing else but a philosophy of language and that the 'good' philosophies of language, from *Craylus* to *Philosophical Investigations*, are concerned with all the semiotic questions." Originally a philosopher, with a particular interest in medieval thought, Eco advocates reconsideration of the whole history of philosophy from the viewpoint of semiotics. In these essays (some of which have been previously published in Italian or English) he does not attempt a systematic survey, but examines the contribution of a whole range of philosophers — from Aristotle to H. P. Grice, from Aquinas to Bertrand Russell — to his chosen topics. These include obvious "semiotic" themes like "Signs", "Symbol", "Code", "Isotopy", as well as chapters on "Dictionary vs Encyclopedia", "Metaphor" and "Mirrors".

The last of these essays (previously published in English) is almost playful in its examination of whether a mirror-image can be regarded as a semiotic phenomenon (a sign). The conclusion is that it is real, though apparently not so, whereas a sign is a "virtuality" that appears to be real. The mirror image is not interpretable and does not have the cognitive function of the sign — though with distortive mirrors we can, for fun, take a "pragmatic holiday" and pretend that the image is sign-like. Optics, though, is an exact science, which semiotics or philosophy cannot be: for Eco philosophy has practical power — to change the world or, at least, to make us aware of the need

for change — but not the predictive power the Marxists mistakenly claim for itself.

Those who know of Eco mainly from his best-selling novel *The Name of the Rose* will find familiar his concern with "the eternal dilemmas between law and creativity, between *l'ordre et l'aventure*". His fascinating sketch of the history of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures is one example (in "Symbols"). The "symbolic mode" of early tradition, implying multiple interpretations and emphasizing the ambiguities, was replaced by an "allegorical code" imposed by an authoritarian Church. Aquinas (the subject of Eco's first published work) imposed an order on the chaos by using and impoverishing it. Eco, too, longs in some degree of order to allow for interpretation of chaotic reality but describes meaning not with simplified Porphyrian tree-like structures, but in terms of a "rhizomic" encyclopedia of cultural knowledge (in "Dictionary vs Encyclopedia"). In interpreting a discourse the hearer brings into play his encyclopaedic experience to guess at the likeliest meaning configuration: if communication is successful, then his guess was the right one. The later pretension of metaphors is particularly "rhizomic" and depends on a rich shared cultural framework (in "Metaphors"). What is to be avoided is the overused, ready-made, shoddy *Kitsch* which cuts reality down to size: Eco does not despair of describing the labyrinth, but refuses to do so by curtailing its meanings.

Eco's sparkling wit and humour amply compensate for the obscurity of some of his exposition. Occasionally, the reader must refer to his earlier works in order to understand some of the terms used — *ratio difficilis*, for instance. But on the whole, this collection can be read with pleasure by those unversed in semiotic theory. Although one can pick out some rather curious unEnglish phrases, the language of the essays, whether translated or written directly in English, is more idiomatic than in some of Eco's earlier English books, and often manages to convey the charm of the author's Italian style. The book is pleasantly printed, (though there are a number of minor misprints), and can be recommended as a most enjoyable read.

*Linguistics Today* by Keith Brown (283pp. Fontana. Paperback, £3.95. 0 00 635486 1) is part of the Fontana Linguistics series edited by Jean Aitchison, which includes works by William Downes, John Lyons and Edward Matthews and Thomas Roeper. A survey of contemporary theories of linguistics, it contains separate sections on language and communication, language models, words, sentences, grammar, functional relations and semantics in texts.

# Relaying the foundations

John Sutherland

M. H. BLACK  
Cambridge University Press 1584-1984  
333pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50.  
0521 26473 1

Cambridge University Press have scheduled their quatercentenary for 1984. One's congratulations are somewhat muffled by the fact the Press previously celebrated the same happy anniversary sixty-three years ago. They had their parties and put out an earlier commemorative volume, *A History of the Cambridge University Press, 1521-1921*. Its author was S. C. Roberts, like M. H. Black a senior serving member of the firm. Although the question of priority seems not to have bothered him, Roberts implicitly acknowledged Oxford as the older of the university publishers.

Now, Black argues, the "true beginning" of CUP must be taken as 1584. Previous chroniclers (notably Roberts — although his scholarly soundness is accepted in other respects) were deficient in "logic" when they fixed on 1521. Paradoxically, it is by virtue of this later beginning that CUP justify the slogan now seen brashly at the head of their latest sales catalogue: "400 YEARS OF PRINTING AND PUBLISHING BY THE OLDEST PRESS IN THE WORLD 1584-1984". There is some suggestion here of crowing, if not over Oxford University Press then over the book trade generally. (In a number of places in Black's narrative, the "almost equal venerability" of the other university publisher is rubbed in.) The presumption may be automatically resisted. But, though tortuous, the argument by which Cambridge, having out six decades off its life, now reckons itself "the oldest publisher in the world" is plausible, once one gets hold of it. Historians have customarily dated printing at Cambridge from February 1521. This is when John Luer of Siegburg — known in Eng-

land as John Siberch — published Henry Bullock's speech of welcome to Wolsey, on the cardinal's visiting the University in autumn 1520. Bullock (a Fellow of Queens' College) and Richard Croke (Reader in Greek to the University) had evidently brought Siberch to Cambridge from Cologne, where the art of printing was advanced. Croke was probably motivated by Siberch's ability to print Greek text. The printer was started in business with a substantial £20 loan from the University, who thus patronized if they did not directly control his operation. Over the period 1521-2 he put out some ten titles, all respectfully academic in flavour. After 1522, Siberch disappears. Presumably he returned to Europe, in the face of English resistance to alien craftsmen. His £20 debt remained outstanding for 450 years, when the Press, with much ceremonial and celebration, repaid it, less the £68,000 interest that had accrued. Evidently in 1971, as in 1921, CUP still owned filial respect for Siberch.

No books were produced in Cambridge immediately after Siberch's departure. In 1534, the University was granted the right "to print and sell all manner of books". (Oxford did not receive its equivalent licence until 1632.) The privilege was not exercised. The University appointed various dummy printers (in fact stationers) but not until Thomas Thomas occupied the post in 1583 did volumes emerge under the Cambridge imprint again, successfully challenging the London printers' monopoly. For a century, although new titles appeared every year and printers were licensed by the University, Cambridge cannot be said to have had a fully developed press (that is, a publishing "house", with its own internal management) until Richard Bentley's reforms of 1696. These installed the first Press Syndicate (originally "Curators") as a governing body, allowed for the acquisition of plant and the accumulation of capital and marked out the zones of commercial autonomy and academic accountability within which the Press sub-

sequently evolved. According to D. F. McKenzie in his monumental *The Cambridge University Press, 1696-1712* this date is inaugural: "until 1696, the university as such neither had, nor expressed any wish to have in the fullest sense, its own press".

All this causes difficulty, at least to the in-house historian concerned (as Black is and Roberts wasn't) with establishing Cambridge's pre-eminent seniority. If Siberch is taken as the starting-point, then the other publisher is the older. Theodor Rood was printing at Oxford in the same circumstances as Siberch at Cambridge as early as the 1470s. OUP duly celebrated a quinqucentenary in 1978. An exhibition was put on at the Bodleian entitled *Printing and Publishing at Oxford: The Growth of a Learned Press, 1478-1978*, the Press issued a number of anniversary volumes, including Peter Sutcliffe's *The Oxford University Press: An informal history* (over a decorative 1478-1978 emblem) and Nicolas Barker's *The Oxford University Press and the Spread of Learning, 1478-1978* (its preface contained the claim, by Charles Ryskamp, that "no press is so old").

By the crude criteria of place of publication and local proximity to the university, the first Oxford book precedes the first Cambridge book by over forty years. If, more realistically (as it seems to me), priority is based on the formation of the first self-managing publishing house — as opposed to printing licensees — then again the historical facts are against Cambridge. Oxford's reform of its press, under the Fell Bequest, predated Bentley's by half a dozen years. It was in 1690 that OUP developed those features of corporate ownership and committee management (by a revived Delegacy) that made it in the fullest sense a university press. (In his massively authoritative *History of the Oxford University Press*, Harry Carter takes everything before 1690 as mere "prehistory".)

By these two measurements (first book, mature publishing practice), CUP comes

second. Ingeniously, Black takes CUP to the front with "the criterion of continuous activity"; activity being taken to denote either printing or publishing. Since there is an unbroken line of annual book production at Cambridge from 1584 onwards, he can thus uphold the "400 years of printing and publishing" boast. And this puts CUP a nose in front of OUP, whose "continuous activity" dates from 1585. According to Geoffrey Cass, speaking as CUP's Chief Executive at a celebration dinner earlier this year, "Oxford accepts our claim to be the older of the two great university presses." CUP's reordering of its early history is, on the evidence, reasonable. And if OUP go along with it, everyone must.

The priority dispute involves Black in the unfriendly business of deposing Siberch from his place as "first University Printer", where Roberts honourably cast him. Siberch "is not now claimed as a direct ancestor of the University Press proper". For Black, Siberch is a mere "precursor", a stationer among other stationers with the small difference that he happened to own a printing press. Like some black sheep, he is carefully prised away from any claim to official relationship with the University:

"It is likely that his arrival was a personal initiative by Croke and had nothing to do with the University . . . Siberch's status once he had set up in Cambridge is obscure and therefore debatable . . . the fact that the University lent him money also makes his status ambiguous; for a loan implies a form of acceptance which falls short of total acceptance. Since repayment was not enforced, this last is dubious reasoning."

One can see why Black is obliged to disown Siberch. But some doubts remain. Siberch's activity, though historically isolated, was strikingly prophetic of later university publishing. This is the impression one receives from E. P. Goldschmidt's account in his 1953 Sandars lectures, "The First Cambridge Press [ie Siberch's] in its European Setting".

An undertaking like Siberch's was not conceived on a commercial basis; it was established on a scheme of

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patronage. If any thought was given to the permanence of the enterprise, it must have been expected that a sufficient number of well-to-do scholars would constantly be prepared to come forward with commissions for the sake of seeing themselves or their friends in print. . . . The people who paid for the printers' costs were the men who wanted to distribute free copies of their own compositions to their friends and patrons, as we now demand two dozen offprints of any contribution we make to a periodical, and sometimes we are even willing to pay for them. Such constant willingness to sacrifice money for the sake of fame or notoriety could never be expected to last indefinitely. Most early academic presses were very short-lived.

He may no longer be honoured as CUP's founding father. But Siberch's experiment with the fickle vanity of scholars blazed a trail which the majority of university presses have since followed.

Black has been actively employed by CUP since 1951, during its most fraught years of change and expansion. His preface confesses that he has had to write this book against time. But, as a good publisher should, "I have met my deadline, and that must be the reason for the relative brevity and the derivative nature of what follows." Derivative he is, at least in his early sections. Page after page follows Roberts (Siberch excepted) so closely in outline, illustrative quotation and phraseology that the first half of the narrative must be classed as fraternal warming-over, rather than original composition. Black offers us essentially Roberts's version of such episodes as the receipt of the Letters Patent, Thomas's battles with the Stationers' Company, the first Bible and the subsequent printing privilege, Bentley's reorganization, Baskerville's printing innovations; and so on up to the nineteenth century.

But the second half of Black's narrative (chronologically from the Press's partnership with the commercial printer Clay in the 1850s) is original and lively. A publisher of the old school, Roberts declined to describe that recent part of CUP's history which he knew at first hand, on the grounds that to do so "would be to cross the border-line between history and advertisement". Fortunately, Black is inhibited by no such Edwardian scruple. He devotes as many pages to the last ten years as to the first 200 of the Press's existence. And his story is progressively more gripping, the nearer to the present that he comes. In the last five chapters, he throws off all historical objectivity, to emerge as a partisan employee, loyally involved with the see-sawing fortunes of his firm as it plunges into near insolvency in 1969, only to rise revived fifteen years later, the largest (by number of titles) publisher in the land. By this point, Black is well past Roberts's borderline, and practically at that other boundary dividing advertisement from hype.

Black estimates that during his time CUP has evolved faster and has changed more radically than in the whole of its previous

existence. The Press emerged intact and healthy from World War Two, producing an annual 100-130 titles through the 1950s, and exporting over half its output. Its style (Cambridge histories and science books versus Oxford dictionaries and editions) was fixed, as was the distinct typography and physical appearance of the Cambridge book. But the Press was set in

## PHILOSOPHIAE NATURALIS PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA

AUCTORE  
ISAACO NEWTONO,  
REGIS ASTRONO.

EDITIO SECUNDA AUCTORE ET EMENDATA.



CANTABRIGIAE MDCCXIII.

Title-page of the second edition of Newton's *Principia*, 1713.

its ways, almost fatally so. Partnership with the Clays (dissolved in 1916) had left operations irrationally split between London and Cambridge. Having failed in 1940 to get its status changed, the Press was handicapped by being taxed as a normal trading company. Yet it was answerable not to shareholders, but to the Syndics - academics whose instinct was to run a publishing outfit like a university department.

The 1960s came close to driving it under. Like the rest of British industry, CUP never had it so good. But so ramshackle was its structure, that even sales-led growth was too much for it. (Black identifies an under-priced backlist and out-of-control overheads as main culprits; mismanagement was not a factor, apparently.) By the end of the 1960s, CUP was deep in debt. Wrangling between the Syndics and employees of the Press had reached the stage of recriminatory paralysis. When Lord Todd became Chairman of the Press Syndicate in the 1971 he was

horrified; the Press was to all intents and purposes bankrupt, with a soaring overdraft and with sales and receipts dwindling, so that they were unable to cope with rising costs. I believe that only the knowledge that behind the Press stood the University with its great resources had kept the bank from calling a halt.

Todd is the academic saviour in Black's narrative. His publisher saviour is Geoffrey Cass, appointed as Managing Director in 1972. Their regime inaugurated what Black terms "the recovery". It evidently entailed a new

respect for the ways of the business world. As Cass told a management meeting on his arrival: "We need not feel ashamed of strategic entrepreneurial measures to make ourselves more viable." The Press, he determined, must make itself "at least as efficient as any commercial press". There followed reorganization. (It may have been painful; but Black is discreet on the subject.) By January 1973, the Press was securely in the black, and set for expansion. With hindsight, its misfortunes were timely. The fact that disaster loomed before the oil crises, double-digit inflation, price freezes and the collapse of the institutional market for books meant that CUP was turned around and battered down, well before the competition.

Cass's intramural strategy, as one deduces it from Black, was to wedge open a wider space for the Press's publishing personnel, at all levels. This liberation of professional dynamism enabled the Press to compete in the market-place, without one hand tied behind its back by the Syndics. Under Cass, CUP has gone all-out for long-term growth. Its achievement in twelve years (which presumably represents some sort of mid or even short-term) has been spectacular. In 1984, the Chief Executive (as Cass is now designated) announced that CUP's annual output of scholarly books had risen from around 200 in 1972 to 900 in 1983 and might well break the thousand mark in the anniversary year. Title for title, this was more than any other publisher in the UK. The Press puts out sixty-two learned and scientific journals; publishes over 500 Bibles and prayer-books; exports 71 per cent of its product; its complete catalogue runs to some 7,000 items and 400 closely printed pages. All this has been achieved with 250 fewer staff than in 1972. In 1976, CUP reprised itself by successfully renewing its application to be exempt from payment of tax, as a charitable institution. And in 1978, the Press moved out of London, to concentrate its presence in the newly built and equipped Edinburgh Building at Cambridge.

The last paragraphs of Black's history dissolve into a social whirl of celebration; parties where royalty are gracious, the ladies' dresses outblaze the azaleas, dons' speeches are witty and even the sun deigns to shine on the Press's well-earned festivity. Not to be churlish, the reader who merely consumes CUP's books will be less carried away by all the anniversary cheering. For the onlooker, the recent bullishness of CUP is a rather sombre and thought-provoking phenomenon.

The first thought is that the recovery is oddly familiar. We seem to have been here before. In 1854, in response to the lamentable financial state discovered by the University Commissioners, the Clay partnership was forced on the Press. Clay was a hard-headed, thoroughly commercial London printer. He evidently took the Press by the scruff of the neck. And as Roberts records: "the period of his manage-

ment was one of great expansion. At the end of his first ten years of office it was estimated that the Press produced about four to five times as much as when he first undertook the management." Extraordinary as it is, then, the expansive surge in Cass's twelve years is not unprecedented. And where will the Press go, once it has grown? Can it allow itself to subside into another genteel stasis, in preparation for another dose of commercial shock treatment?

In the centenary proclamation, "growth"-sheer industrial muscle and size of list - is taken for granted as an excellent thing. To have become the biggest British publisher of all time is an incontrovertibly great British achievement. Here, at least, more means better. But does it Black is right to point out that CUP's recent growth has been achieved without the predatory takeover of lesser presses. But other than Oxford, what is there worth acquiring? The thriving duopoly coexists with a stunted and actually shrinking company of secondary university publishers in this country. Has the gigantism of CUP and OUP inhibited the growth of a university publishing sector as diverse and various as the country's universities? Black somewhat sidesteps this question, by repeatedly invoking our pride in CUP as a great national institution. To my mind, the two major university presses are just what the term implies: not public assets but assets of Oxford and Cambridge; more so with their recent provincial relocations.

The current grandeur of the two great university presses renders them clearing-houses for a large quantity of the most ambitious scholarship originating outside Oxbridge. In the English-speaking countries, a book accepted by them is the surest of career books. The world-wide trawl they have seen in Cambridge's latest half-yearly catalogue. Of the authors whose university affiliation is named, 36 are at Cambridge, 22 at London and 13 at Oxford. Of the remainder, there are 79 authors from 32 other British universities; 74 authors from 48 American universities; 21 authors from 17 European universities; 15 authors from 7 Australian universities; 8 authors from 5 Canadian universities; and 5 authors from 4 universities in other parts of the world as far-flung as Tokyo and Lima.

Already, OUP and CUP act as primary publishers to the British university system as a whole, and increasingly to the American, the old Commonwealth and European systems as well. Will they for ever remain tied by deeds of ownership to Oxford and Cambridge? Or will the time come when sheer growth, lack of serious domestic competition and general respectability of scholarship will detach them into some entirely independent sphere of activity? M. H. Black's perspective is long, backward-looking and essentially proprietary. But those are some of the future issues raised by his comprehensive and entertaining house history.

## Putting it across

Katharine Worth

IAN DONALDSON (Editor)  
Transformations in Modern European  
Drama  
181pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0333 334213

"Transformation" and "translation" are key words in modern drama studies these days. The concept of dramatic text as scenario for performance has become orthodox doctrine and the once-provoking question, "Is drama literature?" scarcely rates a debate, except maybe in departments of literature. The critics who gathered in 1979 at the Canberra conference which gave birth to the volume under review evidently felt no need to argue a case for the fluidity of the dramatic text on its way from page to stage, but plunged straight into demonstration and analysis of the transformation process. Uppermost in their minds, as the editor, Ian Donaldson, says, was the question of "getting it across" to audiences receiving the play in a different language and social context from the original - and in a different time, for time inevitably effects its own transformations in perception and expectation.

## Despairingly optimistic

Andrew Carpenter

ARTHUR GANZ  
George Bernard Shaw  
277pp. Macmillan. £11 (paperback, £3.95).  
0333 289188  
DANIEL LEARY (Editor)  
Shaw's Plays in Performance: The Annual of  
Bernard Shaw Studies, Volume Three  
262pp. Pennsylvania State University Press.  
£14.40.  
0271 003464

Any introductory summary or evaluation of Shaw's work runs the risk of forebodingly or misrepresenting important aspects of the enormous canon - fifty plays, five novels and a mountain of provocative criticism and pamphlet work. Shaw's extreme eclecticism is another difficulty, as are the recurrent paradoxes of manner: the high seriousness blended with scepticism, the passion balanced against ideas, the disturbing mix of comic energy and tragic despair. We still enjoy Shaw (those of us who do) because of his uncanny skill in using the comic corrective in a serious way, but to write about the chatty public man of the theatre while bringing out the more serious aspects of his work is not easy.

However, Arthur Ganz's contribution to the admirable Macmillan Modern Dramatists series seems to me to do all this well. Ganz is an excellent guide through the life, the opinions and the major works, never losing a sense of proportion or allowing Shavian enthusiasm to conquer clear thinking. In fact, it is Ganz's understanding of the paradoxes of Shaw which makes his book so sensible: "So enduring are Shaw's comic creations", he writes, "that one sometimes fails to recognise how complex, how disquieting even is their emotive environment. So positive is Shaw's vision of social and evolutionary progress that one hardly notices how disabused is his view of the human present and how profound his desire to transcend it." From this tension arises the Shavian drama, at once "lucid and optimistic, elusive and despairing". Ganz is clear, too, on the drama, particularly in his chapter on the plays of maturity, from *Man and Superman* to *Saint Joan*. Here he discusses seven or eight major works in a short compass with energy and wit, and many of his judgments are admirably fresh and full of insight. This is not just a "companion" to Shaw but a serious and thoughtful appreciation.

Discussion of Shaw's ideas has always been widespread but until recently there was little textual research and little consideration of his stagecraft. Both areas are now receiving their due and the latest *Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* concentrates on Shaw's plays in performance, and contains some fascinating information. Daniel Leary's balanced and intelligent analysis of Shaw's use of the audience in "From Page to Stage to Audience in Shaw"

Among the various kinds of transformation examined, translation from one language to another, though obviously important, emerges as a less spectacular influence on perception than the transformations effected by director and designer. John Willett, well known as the translator of Brecht, writes interestingly on ways in which translations can change dramatic emphasis; his experiment in performing a scene from *The Cherry Orchard* in three English-language translations revealed, however, only marginal differences. Michael Frayn's version had more sparkle, Ronald Hingley's slowed the actors down, Trevor Griffiths's incited a more aggressive performance from the actor playing Trofimov - perhaps, suggests Willett, because of prior assumptions about that translator's viewpoint. A reminder here that actors too have their share in the translation process.

The power of director and - increasingly - designer to shape text into play is the subject of close attention from Maria Shevtsova: the three 1970s productions of Chekhov in France which she examines constitute, as she says, a radical reassessment of the Chekhovian universe. All three were sharply divided from the historical world of Chekhov and the stage

tradition of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. Lucian Pintilie went so far as to have his three sisters read Chekhov's stage directions at the beginning of each act in a normal speaking voice, as antidote, apparently, to the exaggerated theatricality of their performances within the play. The Brechtian device, says Maria Shevtsova, did not quite succeed "in anchoring the production's overall socio-psychological direction".

Other "free" productions did work, however: Giorgio Strehler's *Cherry Orchard*, according to the commentator, effectively transposed Chekhov's Russia into "an ethereal dream dimension", using subtle arrangements of white to convey a sense of Ranevskaya's "double memory". Maria Shevtsova's charting of Strehler's stage symbolism - the white rhomboid into which the pale costumes of the actors all but disappeared, the vast white veil suspended in the auditorium (an image of the cherry orchard), the toy train which passed by Ranevskaya unnoticed - provided the sort of material that will be needed by the semioticians of the future when they take up (in more sophisticated form than is common as yet) the complex question of theatrical sign-systems.

Maria Shevtsova's conclusion - that there can be no such thing as "one text" - finds echoes throughout the volume. Ian Britain explores the question, "How does a dramatist begin to make an impact in a foreign country?" by taking a close look at the early reception of Ibsen in England, where middle-class socialists and feminists - Shaw, Eleanor Marx, the Charltons - created Ibsen in the Fabian image, at some distance from the anarchistic original as well as from more grotesque transformations like *Breaking a Butterfly*, the version of *A Doll's House* which stood the play on its head by making Torvald noble and Nora suitably repentant and grateful. In Germany, as David George shows, the same text took on yet new appearances; a "Germanic" Ibsen was followed by a naturalistic Ibsen à la Antoine and

that by the Mactertlinckian Ibsen "revealed" by Eleonora Duse to the critic, Bahr: "Duse's Hedda Gabler, which we saw last year, first enabled us to sense the other Ibsen which the traditional presentation of Berlin Naturalism hides. They do not notice that his people, however everyday their behaviour may be, always have something almost mystical about them . . .".

From George's interesting attempt to analyse and account for these fluctuations what emerges above all is a sense of their inevitability. The "text" must change as it moves through the theatres of the world and through time, if it is not to become a museum piece. Even the Soviet authorities recognize the need for an "escape valve" from the approved museum style of "pseudo-Stanislavskian socialist realism"; so suggests Kyle Wilson in a particularly informative account of stylistic experimentation in the contemporary Soviet theatre. At the Taganka Theatre, or more especially in the Baltic republics, subversive stylizations abound: designers such as Blumberg make bold visual signals in abstract, geometrical modes which audiences learn to read as another language.

One type of transformation, adaptations to the media of radio, film and television, is not examined in the collection. Martin Esslin includes *Ghost Trio* and . . . but the clouds . . . when tracing the movement in Beckett's later dramatic writing towards an art of visual images. But Bernard Dukore's account of film versions of Shaw's plays remains a tantalizing reference in the editor's introduction, along with such intriguing topics as Vicki Ooi's investigation into the problems of presenting Brecht's plays in Cantonese to a Chinese audience for whom his "exotic" distancing Chinese effects were not exotic but familiar.

A useful and suggestive volume, however; we may expect more of the kind as concepts like "transformations" and "reception theory" take hold in modern drama studies.

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# Remainders

## Eric Korn

I shall be claiming a modest place in the Triumphant Entry into Oxford of her new Professor of Poetry, Peter Levi, for I had some vague role (business manager? advertising manager? circulation manager? — but we knew nothing of business, despised advertisers and had no circulation, only a single sanguinary pulse) in a magazine called *Seed*, which may enshrine his first appearance in print, apart, as we cautious bibliographers always say, from possible juvenilia, children's poetry comps in *Illustrated*, school magazines, Jesuit Relations and the like. *Seed* did not germinate, or rather it germinated but did not sprout, put forth a single cotyledon and withered away. It was an Oxbridge journal of advanced and eclectic tastes, now hotly sought, or should be, by determined collectors of Alan Bennett, Michael Frayn, Oliver Sacks, and Petrus Wort. I doubt if many contributors, let alone readers, kept their copies, and I happen to know, or at least one of the other business/advertising/circulation managers told me, that the remainder was ceremonially cremated, sharing the fate of many a worthier work.

Burned books have a habit of turning up in larger numbers than you might expect — the seized third printing of *Ulysses*, the bombed first edition of Peake's *Captain Slaughterboard* — though only two and a bit copies of Michael Servetus's *Christianismi Restitutio* survived ignition by Calvin in 1553, a better ratio of non-flammability than poor Mike S. himself managed, he being incinerated along with the books to help them make a cheerful blaze or they him. *Christianismi restitutio* contains a remarkable passage about the lesser circulation of the blood, antedating Harvey, but it and he were not burned for that.

Then there are all those first books, of usually undergraduate usually verse, by authors as diverse as Graham Greene and Hugh Miller (the Neolithic geologist and, later, suicide), of

which — it is alleged — their creators grew ashamed and spent their years of success busily collecting and destroying. Are authors really vain enough to do this? Or are they too vain? Either way I doubt if they can outwit the pertinacious collector. I suspect that they give innumerable "last surviving" copies of their early works to friends, with instructions that this book is rubbish and should be burned, but to dispose of it as they, heavy nudge, see fit.

\*\*\*

Personally, I would have backed Fenton, a man of diverse talents, especially admired for his translation skills, "a poet blessed beyond the poet's fate / Whom Heaven kept sacred from the proud and great: / Foe to loud praise and friend to learned ease, / Content with science in the vale of peace"; but I was confused by his candidature, being under the impression that he had died in 1730 "of gout according to one account, of lack of exercise according to others", say my sources.

\*\*\*

Knockabout Comics was acquitted of spreading depravity and corruption by teaching people how to distinguish *Psilocybe semilanceolata* from *Psilocybe caerulea*, and for the moment The Obscene Publications Act is not to be used to discourage the spread of vices other than *Luxuria*. (Rumour alleges that the PM was warned that avarice was next on the list and the faggots being piled for Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman.) Other trials are to come.

But the book-burners are still amongst us, as a leisurely walk through Soho (just on my way from an auction view to the British Library, Your Worship) will confirm. The odd coalition of GLC radicals and Westminster Council bluenoses has had some effect and the sex industry (or more accurately the anti-sex industry) is in disarray, or *désablée*. Blue cinemas are singing the blues, the elegant fascia of the

Crazy Hoes Saloon is no longer in evidence, "Topless Girls! There's not many left!", is the *cri de coeur* or at least *de poitrine* in Brewer Street, and Uncle Detumescent's Adult Book Parlour and Ogling Lounge now sells the *Robin Annual* for 1982 or at least displays it.

The Soho Society claims some environmental success, but you would be naive if you imagined that the Porn Barons, Lewd Lords, Vice Viscounts and other aristocrats of licence were abandoning their prime cuts of real estate to elderly bespoke shoemakers, purveyors of fresh pasta, Bavarian hat-feather chandeliers and other ecologically admirable tradespersons. Nor has Dylan Thomas returned to Fitzrovia or Father Christmas to the French Pub. Instead, business flexibility and innovative trading techniques, so essential to our economic survival, are being widely displayed. The sex cinemas, which provided, I suppose, more or less the product they promised, have been replaced by "hostess parlours", "live shows", "executive topless bars" and the like, from which one sees emerging a steady stream of felled tourists, glumly counting in Swedish or Swahili the cost of an evening of watered ginger ale at seven pounds fifty a tumbler. Squeezed between laws concerning Indecent Display and laws concerning Misleading Advertising, it is language that is having to show the greatest flexibility. "Hard Core Pictures on the Big Screen" proclaim many of the cinemas, and if "pictures" sounds like a curious piece of 1950s whimsy, one more brazen establishment gives the show away by whispering in tiny letters "erotic slide-show". Elsewhere an erstwhile pornothèque has turned itself into a Private Alternative Birth Control Information Education Centre, and is distributing an ingenious leaflet that suggests that onanism, considered as an indirect method of birth control, is the only one that is safe, legal, and 100 per cent effective, especially "in conjunction with books/magazines manufactured as aids to contraception/fantasy (Please ask assistant for further details)". If the prospect of an erotic magic lantern display does not turn you on, there are peep shows ("every ten minutes a new young girl") and "nude encounters"; the overall effect seems that more people are being depraved, more corrupted; the new morality leads to more criminality, London still demands its maiden tribute, and another Victorian Value is restored.

\*\*\*

It is not just the lecherous visitor who is being frustrated. Of the uncountable currency exchange bureaux scattered about the West End of London, about half are actually run by brigands; parsimonious tourists observe with glee that they offer a marginally better rate for the dinar or the drachma or the doubloon than the banks, and fall to read the fine print, which mentions, in the fly's-eye type normally reserved for printing thumb bibles, that the commission is 9 per cent, and that transactions once commenced cannot be broken off or reversed. And no authority seems able to proceed against these smiling cutpurses.

\*\*\*

What England wants . . .  
What England needs . . .  
What England doesn't have is a newspaper that tells lies.

Yes, of course, but I mean really prime fibs, like the whoppers in the *Weekly World News*, printed in Lantana, Florida and permeating the continent like rancid orange juice, with stories like DUMBO DOCTORS GOOF AND MOM GIVES BIRTH TO TEST TUBE MONSTER (being kept alive for dark purposes in a secret Russian mutation factory, the tale goes on); COPS DISCOVER SAVAGE KILLER OF 37 IS A WEREWOLF and — the headline I'd most like to be marooned on a desert island with — FAMED PSYCHIC'S HEAD EXPLODES. Seems that the Russians (then again) were measuring one Red spoon-bender's power to deflect incoming missiles to less vulnerable targets, for example the launch pads they had come from, and thought it would be educational to match him against another psychokinetic whiz who could bend the trajectories straight again. So there they were in their respective silos, engaged in fierce men-

tal duel, eyes slitted to show intense concentration, magnetic power waves radiating from bulging orbits, throbbing, thrilling chords on soundtrack and then suddenly boom! pip! squeak.

The advertisements are helpful too: hypnotic eyes in five minutes, the new 19X water machine gun, and the Sacred Seal of Solomon ("Incredible! Get everything you Want! You can 'Develop a Rock-Hard Lean Six-pack' with 'Speed-Shaper' (No Doorknob Needed)", or you can "Cast your spell with Your New Irresistible Man-Catching Enchanting Bust", though what happens when an irresistible bust meets a rock-hard stomach is unpleasant to contemplate. A man called Bob, whose address, for some reason, is Dulles International Airport, suggests that if we want the Lost Secret "Wealth Formula" ("a brand-new \$200,000 dollar home completely paid for, and MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, \$1000 a day coming in every day for the next seventy years") we should write to him within seven days; but no one can outbid the Lourdes Cross, perhaps the most blasphemous thing in print. "When you own this REAL diamond Cross of Lourdes with its Genuine eternal light and Genuine Lourdes water wrapped in Genuine Gold, watch how fast you 'Luck into' THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS." And all the kindly and pious manufacturers want from me is sixteen bucks and my promise that once I experience my miracle I will let them know so they can register it in the Book of Miracles (now preparing), which will be sent on completion to the Vatican . . . to Jerusalem . . . to Mecca . . . to New Delhi and other great religious centres. There is a reverent description of the process of manufacture ("very carefully water drawn from the miraculous spring of Our Lady of Lourdes, France, is entered into the magnificent Chamber of the diamond cross . . . with slow painstaking effort, a gold replica of Our Saviour is united with the body of the Cross") and a tabulation of the kind of miracles you can expect, lest you have some lingering fear that you are only being offered spiritual gifts:

- Miracles that can make you rich (with wads of bills to spend as you please)
- Miracles that deliver you expensive new cars
- Miracles that let you win at Bingo, the lottery, the track, the casinos (wherever you go you hit the jackpot).

Sounds like the meek are going to inherit the earth sooner than you might expect.

*Weekly World News* also features, in a ditty little story entitled "Shopping Mall Monster", what may be the World's Worst Misaligned Participle: "Then he drove them to his home where, still blindfolded and tied, he raped them".

\*\*\*

A thought for Feminist Book Week: "however true or noble your modes of thought, to you, female authors, clings a portion of the pit-maeln curse, even to the pen. Directly you, take it into your hands, and gain, should you be talented and fortunate, the world's notice . . . you must forego many of woman's most natural hopes and aspirations. You too often lose your sex's dearest aim — to be loved — and the men fear you . . . I believe the generosity of business-plodding, half-educated men, to whom their own 'little knowledge is a dangerous thing', and who form the bulk of the court- and marriageable portion of the male community, would as soon take to their homes and hearts a native Caffre or Hottentot woman, as they would one who dared to have her own ideas, or who (still worse audacity) knew how to express them on paper . . . Think, literary women, then, of the privileges you must forego, if, instead of a darling needle, you choose to wield the pen. You must not expect to be promoted to the task of pouring out a husband's tea, mending his stockings, or, with undeviating fidelity, sewing the buttons on his shirt."

Augusta Johnstone, *A Woman's Preaching for Woman's Practice*, 1857.

The Royal Society of Literature has announced that the 1983 Heinemann Award will be published in the UK by Macmillan on July 28, price £17.50 hardback (0 333 37341 3) and £7.95 paperback.

# Letters

## Ivy Compton-Burnett

Sir, — In his sparkish review of Hilary Spurling's *Secrets of a Woman's Heart* (June 8), A. N. Wilson writes of "the dowdy guzzling witch of Braemar Mansions, prosing ceaselessly on about refrigerators or the difficulty of getting servants". Such a description will seem totally inapt to anyone who bothered to get to know Ivy Compton-Burnett well.

Firstly, her appearance, though certainly idiosyncratic in its disregard for fashion, had the same restrained elegance as that of some elderly Japanese woman in costly, subfusc silk kimono. Secondly, though she took a pleasure in such childish treats as potted shrimps or muffs, she was in no sense a glutton. In her later years she did not give dinner-parties and she rarely invited anyone to luncheon; she ate only the lightest of suppers. If she liked "a good spread" (her phrase) for her guests and herself at tea, what was so greedy about that? Thirdly, though someone so wise and serene might well be described as a sybil, she had none of the malevolence that would justify calling her a witch. Fourthly, although with those people who flitted through her flat patronizingly resolved to indulge her supposed preference for talking trivialities, she was prepared to do just that, she was always capable — as her extended conversation with Kay Dick, published in *Ivy and Stevie*, amply demonstrates — of going wide and deep.

Incidentally, Mr Wilson's first amusing paragraph is based on a total misapprehension — from which he constructs a scene, worthy of one of his novels, in which the beneficiaries "jostle one another in the corridors and impede one another's ascent and descent of the stairs" as they collect their loot immediately after the funeral at Putney Vale Crematorium. In fact, it was not "decreed" (his word) in Ivy Compton-Burnett's will that her legacies should be distributed in this precipitate and wholesale manner. The idea (Mrs Spurling fails to make this clear) was that of the inheritor of the remainder of the contents of the flat, Hester Marsden-Smedley. I declined to pick up my bequest in such circumstances.

FRANCIS KING,  
19 Gordon Place, London W8.

## Alma Mahler

Sir, — I am surprised that a person as meticulous as Hermione Lee in her adulatory review of *Alma Mahler* by Karen Monson (May 11) should have wiped out Alma's offspring in one sentence: "Alma had three children who died young. . . ."

In 1967, by commission of the *Guardian*, I interviewed Anna Mahler, then living in Los Angeles. The caption of this piece was, "I hated the Name of Mahler." Anna, of course, is the daughter of Gustav and Alma and was a sculptress. As far as I know she is still alive, if not well, and lives in London and sometimes Spoleto, and sometimes in Los Angeles.

I hardly think she would appreciate reading about her demise.  
SOPHIA WYATT,  
401 Washington Avenue, Santa Monica, California 90403.

## Poetry and Rhetoric

Sir, — I have no quarrel with Anne Stevenson's argument (Letters, June 1) but our being halfway through 1984 is no excuse for allowing yet another small item to go down the memory hole. She quotes Seamus Heaney's dictum that "Poetry is out of the quarrel with ourselves and the quarrel with others is rhetoric". This is, in fact, Yeats's dictum very slightly rephrased, as I'm sure Heaney would be the first to acknowledge — although he doesn't do so on page 34 of *Preoccupations*. In the paranoid politics of nuclear confrontation, these are modestly encouraging words, and I take it that they embody more or less Ignatieff's view of the continuing relevance of Grotius: a just measure of armed force, avoiding both the excesses of the nuclear threat and the naïvetés of the utopian dream. Unfortunately, they are words which fail to subject the Grotian theory to what is perhaps its most challenging test. The "distant future" is, precisely, distant, and leaves entirely open the question as to what in the meantime is to be done, in terms of a Western European defence policy, so as to maximize the possibil-

## The Defence of Western Europe

Sir, — Michael Ignatieff's review-article (June 1) is an intervention in the debate concerning the siting of Cruise and Pershing missiles and modern nuclear strategy in general, which demands close attention. It does so not simply because of the even-handed way his piece describes and assesses the different arguments advanced by the books under review, but, more importantly, because, from that assessment, it sketches a reasoned case for a possible way out of the current impasse. The intellectual lynchpin of this case derives from the liberal political theory of Grotius. Ignatieff cites Glucksmann's recourse to Grotius in *La Force du vertige*, as providing the rationale for the concept of deterrence, and while he rejects outright very many of the inferences Glucksmann draws from Grotius' thinking, the basic premise of his own position appears to be taken from the same source. The strength of Grotius, on this reading, is to have offered a "realistic" account of the conditions under which the pursuit of liberty and peace is maximally secured: one such condition is a willingness to go to war to protect liberty if another power seeks to remove it by armed force. The principal aim in this scenario is to avoid war, to deter a potential aggressor, by letting him know that you have the wherewithal and the will to counter aggression. In the event, deterrence may not work; further, you may lose the war. But, on the Grotian model, these are the risks and the possibilities that must be grasped, the "price" you must be prepared to pay, as the only realistic alternative to the utopian fantasy of universal peace.

How far a political theory elaborated in the conditions of the seventeenth century can serve as general model for the conduct of political life in the twentieth century is a question I leave on one side. The particular issue here concerns its relevance to the matter of nuclear strategy and the doctrine of deterrence. The obvious, and oft-repeated, argument is that nuclear weapons have created a set of conditions which Grotius' theory could not possibly have envisaged: the prospect of mass-annihilation and the possible destruction of, or permanent damage to, life on the planet as a whole. It is perhaps interesting, though probably futile, to speculate on whether Grotius might have felt inclined to modify, or even jettison, his theory in the light of that prospect. Ignatieff, however, tries to adapt Grotius to these unprecedented conditions by way of a set of propositions built from a series of interrelated technological, military and political considerations. Technologically, the arms industry is now capable of supplying systems so precisely controlled and targeted as to create "limited" damage in the event of war; whereas under the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction and its subsequent refinements, the stakes were all or nothing (and hence not really "credible"), the new technologies can set constraints on damage from which the classic paradox of deterrence theory (willingness-to-use as the condition of never-being-used) emerges in a more plausible form. It is important to stress that Ignatieff's appeal to technology is not in support of Cruise or Pershing, whose credibility as deterrents he doubts (although he does not openly endorse the demand by the peace movements that they therefore be returned to the US without delay). Nor is it ostensibly an argument for any kind of nuclear weapon at all. The appeal to technology is ultimately for the development of sophisticated systems of conventional deterrence which "in the distant future" may even spell the end of nuclear weapons themselves. In the paranoid politics of nuclear confrontation, these are modestly encouraging words, and I take it that they embody more or less Ignatieff's view of the continuing relevance of Grotius: a just measure of armed force, avoiding both the excesses of the nuclear threat and the naïvetés of the utopian dream. Unfortunately, they are words which fail to subject the Grotian theory to what is perhaps its most challenging test. The "distant future" is, precisely, distant, and leaves entirely open the question as to what in the meantime is to be done, in terms of a Western European defence policy, so as to maximize the possibil-

ity of there being a future at all. A conventional system is potentially effective only against another conventional system; against nuclear weapons it is impotent. Assuming that, in the meantime, the Soviet Union remains in a position to target nuclear weapons on Western Europe, the crucial question is whether the defence capability of the latter should continue to include a nuclear component. This is not a question that Ignatieff explicitly addresses, but the argument from Grotian principles surely requires that inclusion: you cannot deter without the means to deter. That must then imply, if only for the time being, the deployment of nuclear weapons of "limited" destructive capacity.

But this in turn raises further difficulties. One is political: the idea of deterrence based on the prospect of "limited" nuclear war in Europe can carry no credibility whatsoever, either in the eyes of the Soviet Union or of the Western peace movements, so long as the structure of control and command over nuclear weapons sited in Western Europe remains essentially in the hands of the Americans (this is not just a matter of the contingent, though perilous, fact of the current "Bourbon" occupancy of the White House; the problem is structural). Ignatieff fully acknowledges this difficulty, but it is unclear what he is proposing as an alternative. Is it an integrated European strategy, including a nuclear component, but entirely severed from American nuclear strategy? What kind of nuclear weapons would this policy require (Cruise, the neutron bomb, etc)? What are its implications for membership of Nato? Does not the proposition entail a major re-think of political alliance, military disposition and the use of economic resource? If so, these need to be spelled out. Secondly, there is a difficulty of a specifically military kind: as Michael Carver has repeatedly explained, the notion of "limited" exchange (however "precisely" targeted the respective systems) would prove to be, in the real conditions of war, an extremely fragile one; the chances of rapid and uncontrollable escalation to all-out exchange are very great. When, even under the technological arrangements envisaged by Ignatieff (assuming they continue, for some considerable time, to have a nuclear component), does "limited" become more than limited? How much of a residual Europe falls below the threshold of the "acceptable"? The point of the general argument is of course designed to forestall these imagined eventualities. But if the reference to Grotius is to make any sense at all, it must mean that, prior to the advent of that "distant future" in which there are no nuclear weapons in Europe or targeted/ targetable on Europe, in the last analysis Western Europe would be willing to go to nuclear war in the defence of liberty; and that that will make sense because, from the "limited" exchange, there will be sufficient survivors, and sufficiently surviving economic and cultural forms, to ensure the continuation of the traditions of liberty. But that is a moot point. The more one refines and localizes the targeting, the more "thinkable", and the more real, the possibility of nuclear war becomes, with no guarantee that, once war has broken out, the scale of damage could be limited to what any "rational" person could deem "acceptable".

The question, therefore, is whether, as we await the distant future, the current risk is worth taking. I have no idea what Grotius' answer to that question might conceivably have been. His argument was that, to protect liberty, you seek through the acquisition and maintenance of armed force to deter an aggressor, but that, if you fail to deter, you must pay the price of sacrificing substantial numbers of lives. Translate "substantial" into "mass" or "total", and you are engaging in a rather different kind of calculus. Is it then better red than dead? The question is notoriously provocative, and makes assumptions about Soviet "intentions" with regard to Western Europe. Ignatieff points out that Glucksmann's lyrical defence of Western nuclear strategy presumes, but makes no effort to demonstrate, that a nuclear-disarmed Western Europe would be immediately up for Soviet grabs. On the other hand, the soft-peddling on the Soviet stance by some members of the Western peace movements is equally disingenuous. It is probably pointless to speculate about Soviet "inten-

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Henry James on the beach near Dunwich, Suffolk in 1897.

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## Letters

tions"; we do not know what they are, and a *fortiori* what they would be in altered conditions (such as a unilaterally disarmed Europe). The argument can only reasonably proceed if it is entirely detached from speculations about Soviet "intentions", or alternatively if we ask ourselves what our attitude is to be on a worst-case assumption with regard to those intentions. It is a dishonest move to duck the question: what if, in the event of unilateral nuclear disarmament, the Soviet Union decided to attack Western Europe backed by a threatened use of nuclear weapons? Clearly we are being asked to weigh imponderables and, from that difficult judgment, to take up a position. My own is that it is better (the risk of) red than (the risk of everybody) dead, because that way there is still somebody left, however adverse the conditions, to struggle for the notion of liberty that Grotius stood for. For partisans of the classical tradition of liberal political theory, this position entails a paradox even more "verging on the ridiculous", though perhaps ultimately saner, than the convoluted arguments of Glucksmann's *La Force du verite*: to save what is the most admirable ideal in that theory, you have to countenance the partial dismantling of other features of the theory which were originally designed to protect that ideal; in practical terms, that means dismantling our nuclear weapons systems.

CHRISTOPHER PRENDERGAST.  
King's College, Cambridge.

## 'Cassino'

Sir. - Your usually admirable proof-reading has wavered a little at the end of my review (June 8) of John Ellis's book on Cassino. I did not attribute to Mark Clark the view that "the capture of Rome would be 'useless' for Overlord if it came after D-Day" but that it would be "useless" if it came after D-day for Overlord. By this he meant that it would be useless to him personally, because publicity for his achievement would be kept out of the headlines by the greater publicity for Overlord. The opening sentence of the next paragraph, which was designed to illustrate the value to Overlord of operations in Italy, should read "Anzio caused the Germans to send an extra three divisions to Italy and the capture of Rome another eight."

DAVID HUNT.  
Old Place, East Wing, Lindfield, Sussex.

## Aspects of America

Sir. - Grateful though I am to Terry Eagleton for a perceptive review (April 27) of my *Collected Poems*, may I be allowed to correct what strikes me as a misreading of my "Author's Note"? Eagleton writes that in it "[Hamburger] apologizes for the anti-Americanism of some of these pieces" - that is, my "sardonic social commentaries", as he calls them - "in a nervous variant on the 'some of my best friends' formula".

My reason for commenting on the American setting of the pieces in question was that, to me, "anti-Americanism" would indeed be as

irresponsible an attitude as the "antisemitism" of Eagleton's implied analogy. It would be to blame Americans corporately for an ideology which many of them like no better than I do, much as Ezra Pound, for instance, blamed the Jews for usurious practices and institutions which, as he knew, flourished without Jewish participation in medieval Italy - the very country of his choice! The fact that Pound also had Jewish friends makes the identification not less, but more, irresponsible; and the same would be true of my imputed "anti-Americanism" if my apology had been a variant of the formula.

Whether on "Romantic libertarian" grounds or not, I am opposed to "bureaucratic, consumerist, profit-obsessed capitalist society", as Eagleton put it; but I can no more be "anti-American" on those grounds than I can be "anti-Russian" because of that country's bureaucracy, touched upon in other "unpleasantries" in the book.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER.  
Marsh Acres, Middleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk.

## Political Judgment

Sir. - I want to thank Jeremy Waldron, in his review (April 27) of my book *Political Judgment*, for exposing a source of possible misunderstanding, and to take this opportunity to correct any perceived ambiguities. Waldron states that political judgment is either a natural aptitude, like eyesight, possessed by all, or it is a social artefact, indeed "a very fragile one". Waldron says that my choosing to opt for the former of these two accounts involves me in "terrible contradictions". However, on page 22 of my book I sympathetically quote Gadamer to the effect that Kant was wrong to conceive judgment as a universal faculty rather than as a socially developed capacity. But even on the assumption that judgment is in some respects to be understood on analogy with natural abilities such as eyesight, surely even basic capacities like these can be trained and developed (or damaged): through socially acquired practices (namely eye exercises). Conversely, the naturalness of the faculty is not diminished by the fact that some are blind - and the same might hold for the analogous case of Eichmann's moral blindness. Even if it is natural for human beings to possess moral "eyesight", some (or many) may be blinded, so to speak, by the pernicious influence of bad social practices (and "pathologies" need not be exceptional; they can be widespread).

These considerations would seem to loosen the rigid distinction that Waldron wishes to enforce. Contrary to Waldron's mutually exclusive dichotomy between native endowment and acquired skill, cultivated skills or practices may have their basis in nature, as Aristotle contended in his theory of the virtues. In any case, I don't believe that I ever denied, or suggested reasons to question, that the development and exercise of political judgment is dependent on practices and social conditions; truly, its exercise is fragile, particularly within contemporary political life, with its tendencies

to undermine and discourage responsibility and civil activity. In calling judgment a "faculty", I merely intended, in a way I think faithful to its root meaning, a capacity or power capable of being developed and exercised. (The fact that we all potentially possess moral reason does not imply that we all in fact exercise it.)

As for Waldron's point that I fail to take seriously the fact of political controversy, it seems to me that one can either stress what we share (common reason), or stress what we don't share (what Waldron calls "irreconcilable values"). It seems to me, further, that one can only take controversy seriously by seeing that in argument we potentially address ourselves in common to a shared world, whereas if values are indeed absolutely "irreconcilable", there is hardly any point in persisting with rational debate.

RONALD BEINER.  
Department of Philosophy, Queen's University,  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

## In Microform

Sir. - I was sorry that the "In Microform" column in your American number (May 25) failed to notice the microfilm series, "British records relating to America in microform", sponsored by the British Association for American Studies and published by Microform Academic Publishers (East Aylesley, Wake-

field WF3 2AT, West Yorkshire) which has almost 100 titles in its catalogue. Among its recent publications are *British pamphlets relating to the American Revolution*, with an introduction by Thomas R. Adams and Colin Bonwick, which reproduces 1,178 pamphlets published between 1763 and 1784, and *American records in the House of Lords Record Office*, with an introduction and substantial listing of documents from the early seventeenth century until 1920 compiled by Walter Minchinton and Peter Harper. Further details of this microfilm series can be obtained from the publisher. WALTER MINCHINTON.  
Department of Economic History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter.

## Irish Publishing

Sir. - I was upset by Robert Hewison's recent feature on Irish publishing (Behind the Lines in Ireland, June 1), which deemed the Irish Writers Cooperative, of which Co-Op Books is the publishing wing, to be moribund. This is far from being the case. We are currently putting the finishing touches to our autumn list which will feature six exciting young Irish writers, namely Aileen Ryan, Macdara Woods, Elaine Ni Cullenain, Desmond Windle, Paddy MacEntee and Ubi Dwyer. J. ARDLE MCARDLE.  
Co-Op Books (Publishing) Ltd, 16 Lower Liffey Street, Dublin.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 178  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us answers so that they reach this office not later than July 6. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set, of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 178" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on July 13.

1 Two little hands that meet,  
Clasp on her seal, my sweet!  
Must I take you and break you,  
Two little hands that meet?

2 "Pale hands, pink-tipped, like lotus buds that float  
On those cool waters where we used to dwell..."  
M - and I had afterwards discussed the whereabouts of the Shalimar, and why the locality should have been the haunt of pale hands and those addicted to them.

3 The two friends shared a taste for the macabre  
which had no doubt been stimulated by a reading of

Meinhold and Borel. Among other knick-knacks  
"des ossements (traînaient sur des tables)" and "parmi  
eux une main écorchée, celle d'un parricide,  
parait-il, dont le sang et les muscles séchés restaient  
collés sur les os blancs".

Competition No 174  
Winner: Martyn Collins  
Answers:

1 "Couldn't something temporary be done with a  
teapot?"  
If he had meant to bring the subject prematurely to  
a close, he could not have done it more effectively.  
Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, chapter 2.

2 "I only wanted to help you get on."  
"Yes - showing me off, like as if I was your  
belongings. You'd like to take me up to bed like the  
silver tea-pot - and a silver tea-pot 'ud be about as  
much use to you, I reckon."  
Dorothy Sayers, *Bushman's Honeymoon*, chapter  
15.

3 For this he stands in weariness,  
Tired as a teapot, feeling the small of his back.  
Craig Raine, "The Gardener".

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Lord Annan was Vice-Chancellor of the University of London from 1978 to 1981.  
Julia Annas is the author of *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 1981.  
T. C. Barker is Professor Emeritus of Economic History in the University of London.  
Harold Beaver is the Editor of *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1976.  
Douglas Brooks-Davies's *The Mercurian Monarch: Magical politics from Spenser to Pope* was published last year.  
Craig Brown is the London correspondent for *New York* magazine.  
Andrew Carpenter is statutory lecturer in English at University College, Dublin.  
Richard Clogg is the author of *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 1979.  
Jim Crace's collection of stories, *Continents*, was published last year.  
Kerry Deween is Professor of History of Art in the University of Reading.  
Christopher Driver's most recent book is *The British at Table 1940-80*, 1983.  
Roy Foster's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A political life* was published in 1981.  
Paul Hamilton is the author of *Coleridge's Poetics*, 1983.  
Robert Harbison's *Deliberate Regression* appeared in 1980.  
Martin Henig is a lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford.  
Daniel Karlin lectures in English at University College London.  
Andrew Motion's most recent collection of poems, *Secret Narratives*, was published last year.  
David Parker's *The Making of French Absolutism* appeared last year.  
Robert Parker is the author of *Miasma: Pollution and purification in early Greek religion*, 1983.  
Rebecca Posner is Professor of Romance Languages at the University of Oxford.  
S. S. Praver's Bithell memorial lecture, *Coolsmoke and Englishmen: A study of verbal caricature*, has just been published.  
D. D. Raphael's new book, *Adam Smith*, is due to be published next year.  
Patrick Renshaw is senior lecturer in American History at the University of Sheffield.  
Pat Rogers is the author of *The Augustan Vision*, 1974.  
M. L. Rosenthal's books include *Poetry and the Common Life*, 1983.  
Norman Shrapnel was Parliamentary Correspondent of the *Guardian* from 1958 to 1975.  
Paul Slack is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.  
John Sutherland is visiting Professor in the Division of Humanities, California Institute of Technology.  
David Trotter's *The Making of the Reader* was published last year.  
Yorick Wilks is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Essex.  
Katherine Worth is Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at Royal Holloway College.  
Eamond Wright was formerly Director of the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London.

## COMMENTARY

## Something of himself

David Trotter

BRIAN CLARK  
Kipling  
Mermaid Theatre

Alec McCowen's arrival on stage - bullet head, gristling moustache, pebble glasses, a pipe to complete the kind of jaw-line which would be eventful enough even without it - has the exaggerated swagger of Alf Garnett returning home after yet another defeat for the Hampsters. The impression is strengthened not only by the cockney bluster of the barrack-room ballads he proceeds to recite, but also by the overall tone of Brian Clark's play about Kipling. This Kipling is what Alf Garnett always threatened to become: a cheery old bigot whose prejudices have been turned into a likeable (even admirable) crustiness by their domestic context.

The play is set in Kipling's study at Bateau's, and consists of reminiscences and reflections which frame extracts from the poems and stories, and from *Something of Myself*. Something of himself was, of course, all that Kipling ever gave. Clark has decided to cope with this disabbling reticence by drawing attention to it. McCowen's Kipling tells us that the books are what matter, that biography is the higher cannibalism, that he wishes he was somewhere else. The disavowal of personality becomes a substitute personality, a cosy relationship with the audience. We know it's all in the books, but what confronts us is a man telling us - with a likeable and even admirable crustiness - that it's all in the books. Now that his character has been established apart from the books, he can once again challenge us with those prejudices which seemed so curious, or so wrong, when we read them there. Secure in his domestic context, his den, he can jeer at liberal tolerances. He can declare his hatred of pretension, his devotion to work and duty, his identification with ordinary men and women. For Clark's Kipling is crusty, domestic and populist.

It all makes for a mildly Thatcherite evening, but does it have any connection with what is in the books? Well, yes, but often only by way of some pretty drastic re-arrangement. For example, Clark demonstrates Kipling's populism by joining the stanza of "In Partibus" which ex-

presses his hatred of intellectuals ("long-haired things / In velvet collar-rolls") with the inspection of hedges conducted by Jesse and Jabez in "Friendly Brook". One text, from the early 1890s, shows Kipling at his most paranoid, on the edge of breakdown, desperate for literary success; the other, written over twenty years later, shows him at his most settled and confident. Wrenched from different contexts and different levels of imaginative achievement, they give us rather less than something of himself: an identikit Kipling.

The truth is surely more complicated. Kipling's hatred of pretension was sometimes very pretentious. His irreverence was profoundly reverent. (Stalky and Mulvaney flout authority in order to know it better; they demonstrate its arbitrariness so that their submission to it may be a full and deliberate act, an initiation.) Kipling's realism - his recognition of the hard and unglamorous lot of soldier and labourer - was as romantic as his celebrations of the chivalry of Empire. It is not enough to domesticate these contradictions as "enigma" or "paradox" (another version of adorable crustiness). They must be seen at work, in the production of poem or story or attitude.

And then there is the avowedly romantic Kipling, the gothic Kipling of "At the End of the Passage" or "The Mark of the Beast" or "They". It is often the supernatural tales which are the most intimate. "They" absorbs part of the grief he felt at the death of his daughter Josephine - a grief which is not explored by Clark, but rather flourished and then withdrawn, becoming yet one more token of engaging reticence. We register the grief, but are not allowed to imagine what it might mean to the man, or to the writer. Indeed, we are not encouraged to imagine anything at all about the writer of the macabre tales.

What remains is the pleasure to be derived from McCowen's compelling delivery of the poems, and passages from the stories. Eliot once compared Kipling to Flaubert as a technician of utterance, and you do get a sense of what might have prompted the comparison: the stoical buoyancy of the writing, its idiosyncratic and romanticized impersonality. These certainly are texts which benefit from a public reading. Whether they benefit from the kind of commentary with which Clark has surrounded them is another matter.

## The usual ventriloquist act

Peter Kemp

TOM STOPPARD  
Squaring the Circle  
Channel 4

Essentially, Tom Stoppard's world is that of the undergraduate revue: a brash jumble of japes, intellectual references more knowing than knowledgeable, and would-be bright ideas that - short on staying power - spitter out as merely flashy. Stoppard has spoken of his "commendable admiration" for the "edeclectic, trivial" turn of mind, adding "I never quite know whether I want to be a serious artist or a siren". Reflecting this, his work wobbles between playfulness and ponderousness. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* - an example of the clown not so much wanting to play *Hamlet* as re-write it - invested its jokes with routines with vague intimations of profound import. *Jumpers*, tumbling together acrobats and philosophy, caused some critics to believe they were witnessing intellectual gymnastics. With *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* and *Professional Foul*, Stoppard touched on more sombre subject-matter - political dissidence in Eastern Europe. Typically, he approached it - via play with an orchestra and a football match - with pedantic sportiveness.

This also hallmarks his new television play, a dramatized history of Solidarity, *Squaring the Circle*. In it, the crushing of Poland's sixteen-month bid for democracy is reduced to a sequence of games and gamesmanship. At once frivolous and dull, the play alternates between hollow whimsy and boned-up bits of back-grounded clowning and didacticism colliding as it

lurches from farcical mugging to the comically mugged-up.

The play's title drapes the cerebral-seeming over a cliché: the geometrical impossibility of turning a circle into a square without altering its area rather portentously symbolizes the simple impossibility of reconciling Soviet communism with Western democracy. Around this perception are amassed two hours of larkiness and longeurs. Characteristically, events tend to be seen in terms of spectacle or performance: "Gdansk is a circus"; in Poland "The usual ventriloquist act had fallen apart"; a dissident complains that "The show had started without him". A gamesome view of politics is maintained by metaphor - especially the pasted-board one of cards. "You've played the Russian card too many times", someone is told. A meeting between Walesa, Jaruzelski and Glempl is depicted as a three-handed card-game. And waggishly Stoppard offers three varying versions of it, with trump cards played in differing sequences.

Toying with alternative scenarios is a favourite technique in this play. Several scenes are archly stopped and then - "Try the other one" - presented in some different way. This doesn't so much cast light on events in Poland as on *Squaring the Circle*'s narcissistic self-consciousness about its medium. There's much filming of cameras and television crews; scenes set in studios are popular; those apparently taking place elsewhere are constantly broken into to remind you that they're set in studios too. Camera shots are often cranking artificial, with vertical lookings-down on the action particularly favoured.

Matching the play's simplistic sentiments, "Right and wrong aren't complicated" is

## Through a gauze, darkly

Richard Osborne

GIUSEPPE VERDI  
Aida  
Royal Opera House

As a producer and designer, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle is at his persuasive best in comedy, in works like *Figaro*, *Cenerentola*, *Don Pasquale* and *Falstaff*, and in the great baroque and neo-classical offerings of Monteverdi and Mozart which, for all their loftiness and serious-mindedness are, in Susanne Langer's useful formulation, "heroic comedies", eschewing tragic concern. Unhappily, *Aida* is not comic. Not only is it not funny, it also lacks that mordant, ironic quality which so quickens and informs such nodal Verdian offerings as *Rigoletto*, *Un ballo in maschera*, and *Otello*. (Shaw explained the public's wonderment at the comedy in *Falstaff* by their preoccupation with *Il trovatore* and *Aida*, operas "quite guileless" of comic relief.) Nor, despite the best efforts of some scholars to prove us much, is *Aida* a surrogate heroic comedy in the Metastasian style.



A self-portrait by Gustave Courbet, 1852, reproduced in Master Drawings and Watercolours in the British Museum, edited by John Rowlands (208pp, British Museum Publications, £7.50, 0 7141 07972).

Luciano Pavarotti, we were told, was unwell, the throat dry, the voice possibly impaired. In the event, virus or no virus, his was the most distinctive contribution (along with that of the young Georgian bass, Paata Burchuladze, as Ramfis). True, "Celeste Aida", cruelly early at the best of times, was rather fast and brittle, and the orchestral filigree was dimly realized, but with Pavarotti one heard the text; and the voice itself - light, bright, and mettlesome - is apt to Radames's music and manner.

Katia Ricciarelli took the brunt of booing that might better have been reserved for the producer himself. A distinguished Amenaide in Rossini's *Tancredi*, Ricciarelli once had all the makings of a notable Aida; not an Aida in the Turandot manner but an Aida of grace and sensibility. In the event, she gives us a mooning, mournful Aida sung in no style at all. There is little recognizable line to anything she sings; everything is inflected and phrased in a foggy *sfumato*. As a performance, on the first night at least, it lacked clarity and poise. The wide arches and unusual intervals of the vocal line in the final scene were nervously negotiated. In the circumstances, it needed a wiser, more experienced Verdian. In the pit than Zubin Mehta: a finely conducted *Aida* needs a classical line, rhythms that are graceful and fiery, and the tightest control of orchestral detail. There were some fine blazes of sound but no line; some tempi were absurdly quick; the string playing, crucial in *Aida*, was poor.

It's been said that a mezzo-soprano who falls with Amneris has no business on the operatic stage. The young Polish mezzo, Stefania Toczek, happily doesn't fall; robed in one of Pet Halmen's most stylish costumes, she makes her mark. But with so little being generated in the love between Aida and Radames, Amneris's fierier, more complex case is bound to be making its points in isolation.

Best Radio Plays of 1983 (200pp, Methuen/BBC, £8.95, 0 413 55220 9) contains Wally K. Daly's *Time Slip*, Shirley Gee's *Never in My Lifetime*, Gerry Jones's *The Angels They Grow Lonely*, Steve May's *No, Excuse Me*, and Martyn Read's *Scolding for Boys*.

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# The power of fashion

Pat Rogers

NEIL MCKENDRICK, JOHN BREWER and J. H. PLUMB  
*The Birth of a Consumer Society: The commercialization of eighteenth-century England*  
 345pp. Hutchinson. Paperback, £8.50.  
 009 154861

Inventiveness in the eighteenth century often took a lateral turn. Paper manufacturers pioneered ballooning; it took a harpsichord-maker to refine the guillotine. In Britain it was the same story: James Watt devised an office-copier (for which Adam Smith was an early customer), and so did Erasmus Darwin in the interval of dreaming up steam-carriages, a horizontal windmill for Josiah Wedgwood, and a speaking machine. And yet – very unlike today – the British were noted chiefly for hum-drum marketing skills, rather than sheer creative invention. It was the nation of shopkeepers which distributed the products of industrialism. As Braudel has pointed out, the revolution was not just a matter of technical discovery: it was also "the consequence of large-scale investment, of deliberate systematic improvement". Manufacturers follow markets: entrepreneurs seek to create them.

*The Birth of a Consumer Society* celebrates the sales force at the heart of this process, the marketing innovators, the "propagandists of consumption", the entrepreneurs of taste. All three contributors, but especially Neil McKendrick, offer to reinstate the consumer in the main action of economic history. We are asked to correct the supply-side emphasis which has taken attention away from "those hordes of little men who helped to boost the demand side and who succeeded in exciting new wants". McKendrick isolates "this obsessive need to consume" and shows how it was "constantly titillated and encouraged". Appetite is still deplored by moralists, but the wheels of commerce are oiled by the sheer "economic advantages of competition, envy, vanity and

fashion". Along parallel lines J. H. Plumb describes the quest for novelty, the growth of commercial provision for leisure, and the new spate of children's toys, books and games. At a slight remove, John Brewer shows how trades and commercial groupings interacted with Wilkite politics.

The most representative essay in the book is McKendrick's intriguing account of "The Commercialization of Fashion". Again, the central insight is there in Braudel: "Can it have been merely by coincidence that the future was to belong to the societies fickle enough to care about changing the colours, materials and shapes of costume, as well as the social order and the map of the world? ... Fashion is also a search for a new language to discredit the old." But McKendrick brings a wealth of local detail to sustain the general perception, using fashion dolls and plates as supporting evidence, and making many telling comments on the relation of social structure to "the compulsive power" of fashion. He detects at the heart of the process a world "where fashion was being deliberately designed to encourage social imitation, social emulation and emulative spending, a world which blurred rather than reinforced class divisions and allowed the conspicuous lead of the fashion leaders [sic] to be quickly copied by the rest of society", and he instances the role of servant girls in forging the links between classes. Adam Smith wrote in the third book of *The Wealth of Nations*, "With regard to profusion, the principle which prompts to expense is the passion for present enjoyment", but from this account it would seem that longer-lasting satisfactions (which Smith identified with the saving impulse) produced a desire for luxury – that is, a quest for status and advancement, more practicable in England where "a narrowing of social distance" had already taken place.

This essay, and others by McKendrick on Wedgwood and on the art of advertising, raise important issues in a lively way. But two serious grounds for disquiet demand some comment. The first is the exaggeration of the claims for novelty in this approach. This is a paperback version of a book published last year: but

Plumb's Stanton lecture first appeared in 1973 and is now reprinted word-for-word as it stood, whilst his essay on children (wonderfully fresh on its debut in 1975) is already well known. The last essay in the book, "The Acceptance of Modernity", is formally more original, though it does chime in with the conclusions of "The Pursuits of Happiness" in *Georgian Delights* (1980). Nothing wrong with that, or with McKendrick recycling material on Wedgwood – were it not for the repeated and over-insistent claims for innovation. The central insights of this work are in fact already incorporated in the chapters on "Getting and Spending" and "Having and Enjoying" in Roy Porter's *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1982), which is essentially a high-level text-book and synthesis of scholarship. This faintly outmoded note is apparent too when Plumb's notes, wholly in their pristine state, reveal Pepys's diary in the Latham edition still at an early stage: all the musical references are one Grove behind. More seriously, a slightly critical reference to essays by Elizabeth Eisenstein takes no account of their revised form in a substantial work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979). Child-rearing is discussed without reference to Stone, and museums and menageries once without reference to Altick.

It could be said that to be up-to-date is no more than a contingent virtue – and anyway the currency of the ideas canvassed here testifies to the contributors' own success in exploiting their intellectual wares. To be accurate is a deeper obligation, and one must be disturbed by the casualness with which names and references are treated. McKendrick alludes to Ferdinand Braudel; Ralph Strauss; Athenian Stewart; Lady Mary Wortley and Elizabeth Montague; Dr Joseph Addison; and Mrs Delaney. He speaks of "Zoffany's portrait of Lord Towneley surrounded by the spoils of the villa Hadriani": that peer belongs in *The Provok'd Husband*, for Charles Towneley was a commoner, and not many of the spoils came from that precise source. Even Professor Plumb is not immune: he has "Caligostro", Sir Ambrose "Heath", for Heal, and says that "The Roast

Beef of Old England" became a "popular fad" in the 1720s – a decade out, as Roger Fisher's survey of theatre music has subsequently made plain.

Such details, irritating as they are, may be put aside: but Brewer's contribution does still appear the most freshly thought-out, as well as the most fastidious in documentation. He takes a little time to get going, and traverses some familiar ground: but all is for the best, ultimately. He discusses the new structures of private credit, and the anxieties these bred: so often, Defoe had foreseen these worries in *The Compleat English Tradesman*, a text which even more than *The Fable of the Bees* lights up the entrance to these palaces of consumerism. Brewer also points to the many ventures mounted by subscription: one might add to this list the hanging of new church bells, the Swedish Jacobite expedition, and a sort of rescue grant to James Macpherson so that he might pursue Fingal in the northern recesses. One form of "clubbing" Brewer does not mention is the growth of mutual insurance and friendly societies, which were strongly enough in evidence to need regulation by acts of parliament in the 1790s – some time before their obvious political impact.

This suggestive essay opens up significant general questions, but it also serves to throw light on Wilkes himself, as he perceives the "value (and profit) of using recently refined marketing and advertising techniques to publicize [his] cause". Like his friend Boswell, who organized the Paoli subscription and probably helped to orchestrate the press campaign which Brewer cites, John Wilkes was happy to exploit a public image he knew to be remote from, even at odds with, his private self. One of the things make abundantly clear by *The Birth of a Consumer Society* as a whole is that the consumerism to flourish you need more than a captive audience or a craze for novelty: you must have products as well as salesmen ("the public event – Chatham dying, Wesley preaching, or Keppel pleading – lacked the commercial opportunities for Wedgwood"). The supply side has got to be able to deliver what the demand side hungers for.

only half that percentage by 1830. The north-east's share of national output was also roughly halved; but Hlirwaun, Dowlais, Cyfarthfa and other ravenous furnaces in south Wales increased that region's share from 3 to more than 14 per cent. Lancashire's also grew in almost exactly the same proportion. This boost to iron production and engineering helped the development of steam engines, the production of machinery and the manufacture of rail iron which, in their turn, made greater coal output and its distribution possible.

The growing coal traffic determined many of the main transport changes of this period. Because of its low price in relation to its bulk and weight, the cost of moving coal by road was prohibitive. Collieries needed access to navigable water if they were to grow. Large vessels carried huge quantities of fuel down the perilous east coast at roughly the same price per ton as a 10-mile journey overland would have cost; and the modern canal network, started with the Sankey Brook Navigation which opened up the St Helens coalfield in the 1750s, became an essential adjunct to coastal shipping and the river navigations associated with it. Land transport costs from pit to navigable water were also often reduced by the laying of railways, horse-drawn until the early nineteenth century, when primitive locomotives began to wheeze slowly along their insubstantial track. Coal thus played a vital part in transport improvements, as well as engineering. The chapter here dealing with this subject is more informative than many text-books.

Mining enterprises were unlike most businesses at that time in that they involved large amounts of fixed, rather than working, capital. Little money was tied up in raw materials, though horse feed was an important item and coal-stocks needed to be built up; but much fixed capital was required for plant, machinery and railways, amounting in all to perhaps £20,000 or £30,000 in some cases. This was five or six times as much as was usually

needed for the plant and buildings of an early cotton-mill or other factory. Mining continued to be highly speculative; but vast country seats like Brancepeth, Ravensworth or London Castle testify to the huge profits of the sector.

Labour also did well. Not the least merit of this volume is the very sympathetic and understanding chapters on the miners. The work was extremely dangerous, especially in the years before safety lamps; but hewers were well paid and other colliery workers were rewarded *pro rata*. Hewers' hours, many of them at night so that they could enjoy the best of the day when their stint was over, were shorter than those who worked in other occupations, and their earnings rose throughout the period far more rapidly than the cost of living. By the early nineteenth century, if not before, hewers were paid as much as skilled workers in other industries and they had a much younger age-profile. The author draws back, however, when it comes to attributing this greater well-being to spasmodic combinations (of which many examples are given) or to the insistent demand for labour in such a rapidly growing industry. (Output grew from a mere 3 million tons in 1700 to over 30 million in 1830.) He is quite certain, however, that trade unionism in any organized and permanent sense cannot be traced back before 1825.

Behind this volume lies a vast mountain of research, especially for "material which has helped to build up the statistical framework". All new, on which it is based: Prodigious collections of mining records have been accumulated in local record offices and elsewhere and many theses have been written on the subject since Ashton and Sykes produced their path-breaking *Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century* over half a century ago. Alas, this was Michael Flinn's last work, for he died suddenly and unexpectedly very soon after passing the proofs. It will remain a fitting memorial to his labours and skill.

# The art of privacy

M. L. Rosenthal

WILLIAM H. SHURR  
*The Marriage of Emily Dickinson: A study of the fascicles*  
 230pp. University Press of Kentucky. \$22.  
 08131 14993

SUZANNE JUHASZ  
*The Undiscovered Continent: Emily Dickinson and the space of the mind*  
 189pp. Indiana University Press. £11.38.  
 0253 361648

WENDY MARTIN  
*An American Triptych: Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich*  
 272pp. University of North Carolina Press.  
 £20.40 (paperback, £6.75).  
 08070 1573 X

William H. Shurr's *The Marriage of Emily Dickinson: A Study of the Fascicles* makes a strong case for the probability that the great passion of the poet's life was the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, with whom she physically consummated a "marriage" on the same day that it became clear they must renounce one another in this life (since divorce was unthinkable for the already legally-married Wadsworth). Hence the many poems that balance agony, desire, ecstasy and desolate resignation in varying proportions. (These are Shurr's convictions, which are persuasive though unlikely to win absolute assent – the evidence remains too speculative.) Shurr also raises the possibility that certain events and poems can be accounted for by an abortion resulting from the relationship.

All this heavily asserted argument intrudes on the poet's artistic reticences with a detective's logic. Dickinson's poems often give the game away emotionally, but never literally. Shurr explains her "fascicles" – the sequences, containing about half her poems, that she arranged and stitched together in little home-made booklets during her late twenties and early thirties – as an account of the love affair, and its immediate after-effects. That is, they are of course poetry, but the important thing about them is that they were addressed to an audience of one: her lover. Shurr holds that the sequence of the fascicles, and the order within each one, makes for an emotional chronology rather than an artistic structure: "As written to one private reader, and assuming experiences to which he alone is privy, Dickinson's love poems lack the public dimensions that would allow us to consider them as pure art." Although "the canons of aesthetics still apply", they are "secondary" to those of "autobiography".

This is a crude distinction. No one would doubt the confessional implications of the poetry – its erotic intensity and emotional heights and depths. The fascicles do suggest an excruciating drama, though not necessarily the saga of Emily and Charles. Other "husbands", perhaps more than one person, perhaps a fantasy figure, are conceivable. There is far more than this to the fascicles and the individual poems within them: other subjects, other concerns, and most of all the fact that they are the work of a great poet whose art cannot be reduced to "private correspondence". Whether or not Shurr is right about Wadsworth, the quality and dynamics of the poetry are quite another matter, as far from being mere autobiography as "Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing" or "Lay your sleeping head, my love, / Human on my faithless arm".

Suzanne Juhasz's thesis in *The Undiscovered Continent* is similarly quasi-valid, a one-way street going in the opposite direction to Shurr's. Barely aware of the fascicles and their stormy love riddles, she argues that the poet made a deliberate, crucial choice early on. The choice was to create a dwelling place in her imagination, an internalized yet more spacious version of Virginia Woolf's "room of one's own". In this mind-realm, she could be herself and live freely, away from the trap of conventional expectations, and give herself to her poetry. Thus, despite household duties that included tending a sickly mother, her truest home was the "space of the mind" that – as Juhasz engagingly shows – she filled with the

domestic imagery of her poems: the doors, windows, closets and furnishings of every sort.

The basic argument is that, in creating this "primarily interior" life for herself, Dickinson found a rational solution to the problems of woman poets of her day, and that her apparently agoraphobic eccentricity was a deliberate choice rather than pathological. Suggestive and useful up to a point, the argument nevertheless ignores the hysterical dimension of some of the writing, the obvious absorption in one or more love relationships, and the psychological bearing of much of the imagery, whether domestic or not (as in "Twas like Maelstrom, with a notch"). Sometimes – and this is true of Shurr as well – Juhasz seems to misread a poem willfully in her effort to show that Dickinson had found her way to total self-sufficiency. Thus, we are told that the famous poem 303 ("The Soul selects her own Society") is "about the power of the self alone" and the way the soul "turns in upon her own concerns". But that is not quite what "The soul selects her own Society – / Then – shuts the Door" means,

or what the final stanza says either:

I've known her – from an ample nation –  
 Choose One –  
 Then close the Valves of her attention –  
 Like Stone –

That the poem speaks of choosing one other person to love, and one only, is the most likely reading; and "close the Valves of her attention" evokes female sexuality (among other things) with elegant rigour. Those "valves" are hardly closing on themselves alone. The truth is that Dickinson's poetry is more sensuous, volatile, complex and resonant than any of these writers suggest.

Wendy Martin's *An American Triptych* is a foray into feminist literary history, linking the work of Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson and Adrienne Rich. Martin claims "an evolution from Bradstreet's ultimate submission to Dickinson's quasi-rebellion to Rich's rejection of patriarchal culture". Their writing, taken as a continuum, "suggests a female poetic in which nature is not subordinate to reason and in which genius, literary or otherwise, is not

perceived as male energy uncontaminated by female matter". From these quotations it will be clear that Martin breaks no new theoretical ground and that her idea of "poetics" has little to do with poetic form or process. As with Shurr and Juhasz, her specific observations on such matters (though more concrete and attentive than theirs) are hardly responsive to the invitation her subjects offer to enter their worlds of subjective discovery.

Nevertheless, Martin has made a responsible effort to present her poets in their historical and biographical settings and to focus on their basic attitudes and qualities. There is some question-begging in two of her assumptions: first, that "the ideals of the community of women are based on feminist/lesbian values" whose "conceptual framework has its roots in early American history"; and second, that Rich is "the contemporary poet whose work most completely represents an extension of the concerns of Bradstreet and Dickinson". But the book remains a useful, not insensitive scholarly discussion.

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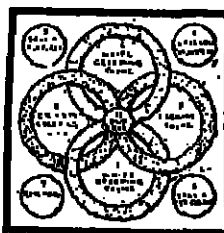
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## Ce n'est pas Guerre

David Parker

NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS  
The Return of Martin Guerre  
162pp. Harvard University Press. £12.75.  
0674 76690.3

In the mid-sixteenth century the village of Artigat, straddling the river Lèze in the foothills of the Pyrenees, was the home of sixty or seventy families. With a bustling local economy, founded on millet, wheat, oats, grapes and the pasturing of sheep, cows and goats, Artigat's inhabitants were well placed to benefit from the trade routes which linked Spain with Toulouse. Proud of its freedom from seigneurial obligations, the village community, although relatively egalitarian, was dominated by a small group of better-off peasants who mixed easily with the merchants and notaries of the communities up and downstream. It was to this comfortable but undistinguished peasant milieu that Martin Guerre, son of Sanxi Daguerre, formerly of Hendaye in the Basque country, belonged. There was nothing to suggest that either he or his beautiful wife Bertrande were about to become central figures in one of the most unusual of French *causes célèbres* and subsequently immortalized in prose, drama, opera and film.

In 1548 Martin, perhaps tormented by the fact that it had taken eight years to consummate his highly youthful marriage, and shamed by his own violation of the Basque code of honour in "stealing" some corn from his father, walked out of the village, abandoning both family and inheritance. He seemed destined for that general obscurity which normally cloaks the lives of the humble. All normality, however, was to be cast aside in dramatic fashion when, some nine years later, a rogue from the Comminges known as Pansette walked into Artigat claiming to be Martin Guerre. Amazingly, the impostor was not only accepted by Bertrande and Martin's sisters, together with many villagers, but in his new role as a well-to-do, independent peasant farmer with sufficient success to elevate himself into the ranks of the rural merchants.

The initial deception, in which Bertrande was clearly a willing partner, became the new reality and the "invented" marriage was transformed into a deep and affectionate relationship. The new Martin, however, did not gain so ready an acceptance by all and a quarrel with his "uncle" over the disposition of some family property aroused latent suspicion. Under duress Bertrande was forced to take proceedings against Pansette. When the local magistrate found him guilty, Pansette appealed to the Parlement of Toulouse, where the case was heard in 1560 by three of the most distinguished judges of the day. Pansette, ably supported by Bertrande, turned on a splendid performance. The court was practically convinced that the couple were the victims of malicious accusations generated by family disputes,

when a man with a wooden leg arrived at the Parlement. He turned out to be the real Martin Guerre.

For Pansette, who was subsequently hanged outside the house in Artigat where he had lived so respectably for four years, that was the end. For the learned judge, Jean du Coras, it was an opportunity to record for posterity his part legal, part literary and part moral account of what the investigation and trial had revealed. It is this account which provides the cornerstone of Natalie Zemon Davis's own treatment. But in addition she has scoured the legal and notarial records of south-western France to recreate for the reader not merely a highly entertaining story but a vivid picture of the world which fashioned its principal characters. Her observations on property rights, inheritance customs, family relationships and the mechanisms of the law are welded together by a rare blend of historical craft and imagination. Setting Pansette and Bertrande firmly in their economic, social and cultural context, Professor Davis produces an explanation for their behaviour which is thoroughly convincing.

## Pox populi

Paul Slack

DONALD R. HOPKINS  
Princes and Peasants: Smallpox in history  
380pp. University of Chicago Press. £21.25.  
0226 351769

In 1978 smallpox claimed its last victim: a photographer working above a Birmingham laboratory from which the virus that causes the disease escaped. A hundred years earlier, in the 1870s, it had caused the death of thousands of people in American cities, hundreds of thousands in Africa and South America, a million in India, and half a million in Europe, where the Franco-Prussian war triggered off a series of epidemics. When the World Health Organization announced the global eradication of smallpox in 1979, it proclaimed a historic victory.

It was a triumph of medical ingenuity, trial and error, social persuasion, international cooperation, and sheer persistence. Inoculation and then vaccination were widely practised long before the disease itself was properly understood. But consumer resistance and problems of medical development impeded large scale progress until recent times. Between 1950 and 1953, however, 500 million Chinese were vaccinated, between 1962 and 1965, 324 million Indians, and in the next five years 75 million Brazilians. Selective epidemiological control followed whenever cases were reported. And it all paid off. The magnitude of the effort is as astonishing as the achievement.

Donald R. Hopkins was one of the doctors involved in the eradication campaign, although he describes it only briefly here, in his concluding pages. A full account is apparently being prepared by the WHO. Dr Hopkins's book is

largely a description of the ravages of smallpox before the twentieth century. He has widely in the histories of civilizations and nations; and he has produced an impressive compendium of information and a diverting collection of "curiosa", as the author terms some of his anecdotes.

*Princes and Peasants*, unlike W.H. Miller's *Plagues and Peoples*, is not a survey of changes in disease patterns, although the author notes some of the more important epidemics of epidemic mortality – the decline of the Amerindian population, for example. He shows the frequent association of epidemic with famine and war, and where relevant traces survive, as for early modern London. Geneva, he describes variations in smallpox mortality over time. But this material is interspersed with speculation about what the effects of the deaths of individual rulers and great men might have been – helping the conquistadors, for example, or hindering the armies of the American revolution.

Dr Hopkins gives more attention to China than Peasants. His book begins, predictably enough, with the illness of Elizabeth I of England in 1562. But Pharaohs, Aztec emperors, Chinese Emperors, and the later Stuart and later Habsburgs, also seem to have been fortunate in their contact with smallpox. All provides some interesting sidelights on the death at the top during various historical periods, and some entertaining stories. "This is one good thing about this", said Abraham Lincoln when he caught smallpox, "I now know something I can give everybody."

Yet there is also a much more serious lesson striving to emerge from Dr Hopkins's material. He shows us the superstitions surrounding smallpox through the ages: the role of Gods and Saints in different civilizations – often remarkably alike in their attributes. The magical power of the colour red seems to have been universally acknowledged, down to the experiments with "red light treatment" which some doctors took seriously in the early twentieth century. In country after country there is evidence of widespread resistance to vaccination, both popular and principled. The practice was thought to interfere with God's providence or with man's liberties. It also conflicted with common sense – it cannot have been easy to accept the apparent injection of a disease.

Dr Hopkins does not tell us enough about how this amalgam of tradition, superstition and human cussedness was overcome. He took the lead, why some societies adopted vaccination earlier than others, why there were retreats as well as advances, even in the nineteenth-century England and America, who paid for mass vaccination, and what vested interests have aided or opposed it. But future historians will undoubtedly want to find more rounded and more searching answers to these questions but in the meantime, Dr Hopkins shows us why we should be grateful to him and his colleagues for sharing history rather than writing it; and why we should keep our fingers crossed and hope that the conquerors of the WHO keep their fingers dry.

PETER READING

## Taken in sequence

Martin Henig

RICHARD BRILLIANT  
Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman art  
200pp. Cornell University Press. £31.  
0801415586

The art of classical antiquity has been extensively catalogued in recent years but ancient aesthetics have suffered surprising neglect. Richard Brilliant's book deserves a warm welcome for the reason that he has addressed himself to the question of how Etruscans and Romans themselves, guided by the skill of the sculptor or painter, would have approached a work of art. The reader is doubly fortunate in having a guide to these visual narratives of such perception and sympathy.

Professor Brilliant draws the parallel throughout between the visual arts and storytelling in literature. The episodic nature of Greek and Roman epic and fiction is paralleled in a range of paintings and reliefs where the observer's eye is focused on a single episode or event – an *aide-memoire* to an entire story (as is the case with Etruscan cinerary urns) or upon a sequence of happenings which serve to highlight those parts of the story which the artist-narrator wishes to bring to our notice. We find that as with literature, "works of art have their own syntax". The literary parallel can be taken very far. Thus,

ancient visual narratives follow many different courses according to their intended use and subject matter, but it cannot be a coincidence that the masterpieces of Achilles Tatius, *Clitophon and Leucippe*, of Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, and of Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, are roughly contemporary with those "masterpieces" of Roman narrative art, the Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius.

Again, in writing of the Meleager sarcophagi which each depict on their main sides an episode from the legend in *medias res* such as the Calydonian Boar Hunt (though there are references back to the early life of the hero and the

beginning of his tragedy). Brilliant cites the narrative technique of Heliodorus in the *Aethiopica*. The dramatic episodes, selected to convey a simple emotional or ethical response, juxtaposed in paintings on the walls of rooms in Pompeian houses, bring to mind the plays of the younger Seneca as well as his father's *controversiae*. Indeed Brilliant rightly stresses the importance of rhetoric in influencing the presentation of Roman art.

*Visual Narratives* has its origins in a series of lectures, which accounts for the fact that like the narratives of which it treats, it selects specific examples by which to illuminate the whole. The first chapter (or lecture) shows how the designers of cinerary urns took a single, dramatic episode from a Greek myth which could be used to stand for the entire story, known well (through constant repetition) by the patron and his friends. Chapter Two, in some ways the most interesting in the book, begins by examining the "Tabula Iliaca Capitolina", especially the main scene in which Aeneas appears three times in successive stages of his flight from the doomed city to his ship. The subject, derived from the *Iliupersis*, would have illustrated for a Roman audience, not simply an ancient myth of which the fall of Troy was the climax but the beginning of a story with no end – no less than the destiny of Rome itself. The similar "Tabula Odysseica" is dominated by Poseidon. His presence has a bearing on the various adventures of Odysseus whose wanderings had been occasioned by his displeasing the god, although he would finally be reconciled to him and die at sea. Roman wall painting sometimes tells stories through a cycle of scenes but we also find juxtaposed episodes related by subject or theme. Quintilian's use of the word *visiones*, "imaginary visualizations" standing for the Greek word *phantasia*, seems appropriate here: such paintings are essentially rhetorical and "surely", Brilliant pleads, "Quintilian's recognition of the value of eliciting a strong emotional response through effective speech applied no less to artfully redundant painted images".

The third chapter is largely concerned with Trajan's column, which we have long been taught to regard as a helical figured scroll telling the story of the Dacian Wars in a long, continuous narrative. While it is convenient for those with access to an archive of modern photographs to look at it in this way the observer on the spot, in antiquity as now, could not. Brilliant shows us how we may "read" the relief vertically, the eyes being focused on the centre of the column. The importance of the pro-

tagonist is inevitably much more emphasized, being further strengthened by the statue of Trajan at the top.

The technique of repetition within a scene is employed elsewhere, for instance on the panels of the Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, but repetition of a different sort is found on the Arch of Constantine, where there is deliberate re-use of Hadrianic and Antonine reliefs. "Within the Constantinian context, therefore, Roman Imperial history has been fully redesigned, reformed, so that its perennial qualities are fulfilled in Constantine." No doubt such was intended, but it seems to me that Constantine's attempt was a cheat, emphasizing only the bankruptcy of sculpture at the time. We need only recall the impotence of Constantine's son Constantius II, before the architectural and sculptural grandeur of Trajan's Forum, wherein he speedily abandoned any hope of emulating the second-century achievement and limited himself to commissioning a copy of Trajan's horse.

In the final chapter, which considers mythological sarcophagi, we seem to be back with the simple Etruscan urns, but here, as I have hinted, the allusive character of the iconography is more subtle, and subsidiary scenes on the lid and sides provide comment on the major tableau upon the front. The choice of major episodes is often revealing; thus Achilles unmasked among the daughters of King Lycomedes represents the moment of his *adventus* as a hero, giving interest to his past life and presaging his future greatness and ultimately his death. Here, as with the story of Meleager, the Roman artist shows a sophisticated mastery of the story-teller's art.

The book has considerable interest to the general reader willing to persevere with a style of writing that is sometimes too dense and not always easy to comprehend. Much of the illustration is in the forms of sketches and diagrams except for the final chapter, which has a good selection of photographs. Cornell University Press should be congratulated on an attractive looking volume, but not on the price.



A marble relief panel showing Paris and Eros on Mount Ida, reproduced from the book reviewed here. repeated images of the *Optimus Princeps*, who appears again and again in the narrative, exhorting the Roman army to victory and accepting the submission of the enemy. The technique of this panegyric in stone is not unlike that of the *Iliupersis* panel on the "Tabula Iliaca" as Brilliant demonstrates (p.109 fig.3.5), but on the column the importance of the pro-

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# The just and the charitable

D.D. Raphael

ISTVAN HONT and MICHAEL IGNATIEFF (Editors)  
**Wealth and Virtue:** The shaping of political economy in the Scottish Enlightenment  
 371pp. Cambridge University Press. £35.  
 0 521 233976

This collection of papers arose from a colloquium, held at Cambridge in 1979, on "Scottish political economy and the civic humanist tradition". The leading exponent in recent years of the continuing influence of the "civic humanist" tradition has been J.G.A. Pocock. He did not invent the term but he is chiefly responsible for spreading the idea and extending the area of its apparent influence beyond the Italian Renaissance to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By "civic humanism" Pocock means an ideology which values the virtue of a citizen of a free republic, virtue that is active rather than contemplative, virtue that lies in freely chosen participation by equal citizens in the conduct and the defence of the common social order.

The discussions at the colloquium evidently centred round the question whether this tradition still exerted a strong influence on Scottish thinkers of the eighteenth century or whether those thinkers can be better understood in the light of an alternative tradition of social thought, that of "natural jurisprudence" or natural law. The focus of interest was the development of political economy, both as a fact in the world and as a theoretical explanation of that fact. So naturally Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is treated as the key work.

The editors begin with an essay intended to "highlight" the competing claims about "the civic humanist and natural jurisprudence traditions in the constitution of the language of Scottish political economy". They wish to show that Adam Smith's use of cardinal notions like justice and liberty owes more to the second tradition than to the first. They argue that his central concern in *The Wealth of Nations* is "with the issue of justice, with finding a market mechanism capable of reconciling inequality of property with adequate provision for the excluded". They think that Smith's introduction to the book pinpoints what they call "the paradox of commercial society", namely that in primitive society everybody works but is poor, while in commercial society many people do not work and yet there is great wealth. According to Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, Smith's primary aim was to reconcile himself and his readers to the injustice of inequality by showing that unequal commercial society meets the needs of the poor far more successfully than its predecessors and so is after all a more just society.

Unfortunately this essay is broken-backed. The fact is that Smith did not regard the needs of the poor as an issue of justice but as one of humanity. He is undoubtedly on the side of the poor against the selfish and idle rich. He does think that the hypothetical state of natural liberty is also one of natural equality. But he never writes of need or equality as claims of justice. He says it is equitable to give a higher

reward to the productive labourer than he often gets in practice; that is justice in terms of desert, not need. It may be said that the use of words does not matter; the important thing is that Smith is on the side of the poor. For practical purposes that is true. But Hont and Ignatieff are making a case on an issue of theory and of "language". They note competing views of different thinkers on the question whether the claim of need is a matter of justice or of charity, and they see *The Wealth of Nations* as advancing the former view.

I think they are also mistaken in attributing to Smith's introduction the idea that wealth joined with inequality is a "paradox". Smith says that wealth depends more upon the skill of labour than upon the proportion of the population employed, as one may see if one compares the poverty of fully employed primitive societies with the wealth of those that are civilized but far from fully employed. The contrast between the two types of society is drawn in order to illustrate Smith's thesis (of scientific explanation, not of moral reconciliation) that wealth depends more on skill than on numbers. The purpose of the passage is simply to introduce Smith's emphasis on the importance of the division of labour as the basic cause of economic growth.

Hont and Ignatieff preface their essay with what readers will take to be a quotation from a single context in *The Wealth of Nations*. It consists of two sentences joined by points of omission. If the two sentences did appear in the order shown and quite close to each other, they would indeed support the paradox thesis. In fact, however, the second sentence comes from the first chapter of *The Wealth of Nations* and the first sentence much later, in the eighth chapter. To treat a text in this way is, to say the least, misleading for the reader, if not for the authors also. The quotation is also inaccurate, and is not alone in this respect.

After this inauspicious start, it is a relief to find that each of the editors makes a more successful contribution to the volume later. Hont provides an informative history of an economic debate, from David Hume in 1752 to Lord Lauderdale in 1804, on the relative advantages and disadvantages of rich and poor countries in the process of international trade. Ignatieff has a valuable discussion of the social thought of John Millar, especially interesting on the sociology of relations between the sexes and on the extent to which Millar followed Adam Smith or struck out for himself. Both these essays lend some, comparatively incidental, support to the view that civic humanism was still influential.

The central theme of the book, however, is best brought out in the essay by Pocock. He now prefers the term "paradigm" to "tradition" in order to describe each of the alternative modes of historical interpretation. The virtue of the word "paradigm" is to emphasize that we are talking about constructions of historians. Pocock, who has a gift for striking metaphor, writes of paradigms as each driving a tunnel with a single theme: "they do not and cannot claim to have told all that there is to tell." In the present case Pocock thinks that both tunnels reach daylight and can illuminate the Scottish Enlightenment.

Donald Winch also concentrates attention on the central issue, but in relation to the central figure of Adam Smith. He makes a thoroughly convincing case for interpreting Smith's work as evolving from the tradition of natural jurisprudence. He considers *The Wealth of Nations* in its original context of lectures on government, and indeed in the light of its own definition of political economy, as "a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator". In some shrewd concluding remarks he contrasts his method of working from text to context with the reverse one of moving "from collective context to text"; the second method risks introducing ideology and produces "the no doubt unworthy suspicion that history is sometimes being forsaken for meta-history".

Nicholas Phillipson is another contributor who concentrates on Smith. His aim is to depict Smith as a "civic moralist" who was much influenced by the "moral language" and "perspective" of Addison. Consequently he begins with an account of Smith's first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Phillipson is a good historian but less sure-footed in understanding philosophy. He fails to appreciate the close connection between sympathy and imagination in Smith's ethics. He supposes the imagination to be a critical agency which stands in the way of "spontaneous" approval. He misunderstands the point of Smith's observation that initial feelings are toned down by those who experience them and toned up in sympathetic imagination by spectators in order to come nearer to each other. He gets into a muddle about Smith's theory of conscience, the imagined impartial spectator. Phillipson thinks there is "an ambiguous level" in the theory because he fails to see that a quotation about "the real or supposed spectator" refers to genuine alternatives, not to one and the same spectator. He describes the imagined "man within the breast" as a "curious device . . . called into existence in response to the rigours of a complex social life"; Smith's theory, he thinks, is not an account simply of "moral behaviour in general but . . . of the peculiar moral constraints which are placed on the citizens of a commercial society" and was "offered" by Smith to those citizens as a practical guide. The very title of the chapter chiefly concerned should have told Phillipson that Adam Smith was trying to give a psychological explanation of conscience as a near-universal phenomenon.

To support his notion that Smith's ethics is concerned with commercial society, Phillipson alleges that Smith "avoids any discussion of relationships within the family". This is simply not true. The very first chapter of the *Moral Sentiments* discusses the feelings of a mother in relation to her child as one of its illustrations. Other examples meet the eye as one turns the pages. Admittedly they do not add up to a large number, as compared with references to non-familial social relationships, and they are confined to the relations between parents and children. This is because Smith was the only child of a widowed mother and remained a bachelor, not because he lived in a commercial society. Throughout the book Smith frequently illustrates general statements by examples from past history and imaginative literature. His treatment of self-command, which Phillipson emphasizes as evidence of reference to the rigours of commercial society, is avowedly drawn from ancient Stoic philosophers and the reported heroism of Red Indian "savages".

John Dunn couples Smith with Hume in order to contrast their sociological approach to values with the "theocentric framework" of the thought of John Locke. Although a historian, Dunn is prepared "to speak anachronistically" and say that Hume and Smith "in effect subordinate human practical reason to the contingencies of sociology", while Locke had the deliberate purpose of "shoring up human practical reason against the contingencies of sociology", although that "is, of course, not something which he would have said for himself". Dunn's talk of "contingencies" (in one place "an evanescent contingency of social history") and "mechanisms of social reproduction" suggests that he himself has been bitten by the bug of sociological language even if he dislikes its substance. He is more sympathetic to Locke's theocentrism and thinks that the anguish which lies behind it is coming home to us today. "It

has taken us nearly three centuries to begin to catch up with him."

Meanwhile Dunn characterizes both Hume and Smith as "practical atheists", meaning people for whom the existence of God, even if it is a fact, "makes no practical difference to sane conduct of human life". I would not like to say flatly that he is mistaken, but he himself unconsciously implies it when he contrasts the mature Adam Smith, who shared the views of Hume, with the younger Adam Smith who published the *Moral Sentiments* in 1759, when he was "little, if any, more enthusiastic than Locke at the prospect of dispensing with belief in a benevolent deity". Dunn quotes a passage which says that "the very suspicion of a fatherless world, must be the most melancholy of reflections". He has failed to notice, however, that the passage was written, not for the first edition of the *Moral Sentiments* in 1759, but the sixth edition of 1790. What happens now is the suggestion that the mature Adam Smith was a practical atheist?

John Robertson provides the most substantial essay in the volume and one of the most satisfying. He comes to grips with the economic development on political attitudes by contrasting the position of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun at the beginning of the eighteenth century with that of Hume a generation later. Fletcher illustrates a version of the civic tradition. Hume represents a move to a wider conception: "the suggestion that commerce is sufficient to enable Hume to realize the ideal of political community with the individualism of his jurisprudential theory of government." Robertson's account of Hume's position is particularly valuable for giving due attention to his political and economic essays.

Another young scholar, David Lieberman, discusses Lord Kames's writings on jurisprudence and especially on equity. Lieberman thinks of his essay as related to the emergence of commercial society, and in the context of this book it can have that purpose; but really who appreciates the importance of the philosophy of law in the Scottish Enlightenment? I welcome the essay for telling much dry stuff. Kames that has not been told before. An inevitably slighter treatment of jurisprudence appears in the essay of James Moore and Michael Silverthorne on Gershom Carmichael, who played a significant role in introducing the jurisprudence of Pufendorf into the course of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

I can do no more than mention the remaining essays, each of which makes a firm contribution to historical knowledge. T.C. Smith provides a straightforward piece of economic history, showing that the Scottish economy was the first half of the eighteenth century was as stagnant as has hitherto been supposed, and then giving a detailed analysis of the economic growth which took place during the twenty years that preceded the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776. This contribution would have received the warmest welcome from Smith himself. Peter Jones writes of the achievement of the Scottish professional class in widening and adapting to contemporary needs the curriculum of the Scottish universities in the period 1720-46. Franco Venturi describes the influence of Scottish eighteenth-century thinkers on those of Italy (but slips in calling Patrick Clason an "English" writer).

The symposium as a whole contains a great deal of interesting information about the impact of economics on the preconceptions of social thought in eighteenth-century Scotland. It is equally if not more instructive in displaying the different preconceptions that historians are liable to import into their task of interpretation.

Volume 13 of *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* has recently been published (1980). University of Wisconsin Press. \$25.00/£9.95/£6.00. Edited by O. M. Brack, Jr. It includes essays on "Science, Natural Law, and Utilitarian Sibling Incest in Eighteenth-Century Literature", by W. Daniel Wilson; "Austen's Clothing: Things, property, and materialism in her novels", by James Thompson; and "Nature, Art and Imitation: The Wild Boy of Aveyron as a pivotal case in the history of psychology", by David E. Leary.

# At and away from work

Patrick Renshaw

WALTER GALENSON  
**The United Brotherhood of Carpenters**  
 440pp. Harvard University Press. £21.25.  
 0 674 921 196 8

ROY ROSENZWEIG  
**Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870-1920.**  
 303pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
 0 521 23916 8

The last two decades, which saw the rise of the new social history and the new urban history, have also seen the rise of the new labour history. This may surprise those barely aware that there was such a thing as an old labour history. Such ignorance would have been more forgivable in the United States where, until quite recently, labour history really formed a part of business and management studies.

The radical upsurge of the 1960s, and the pioneering work of such scholars as David Brody and Melvyn Dubofsky, led to some outstanding work, which dealt with labour unions as institutions in their own right. But then along came the new labour historians to ask fresh questions of the subject's creators. Had not the scope of the discipline, as defined by John R. Commons and the Wisconsin School, and continued by Selig Perlman, Philip Taft and others, excluded not only the majority of American workers who did not actually belong to labour unions, but also those aspects of working-class life - family, the role of women, child-rearing, education, leisure and so on - which could not be encompassed within the narrow study of union activities?

The two books under review reflect the contrasting approaches of the old and the new labour history. Walter Galenson, one of the deans of the traditional approach, made his name with a path-finding study, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL*. Here he has written a century history of the Carpenters, perhaps the most traditional and conservative of the old-style craft unions which formed the core of the AFL. Roy Rosenzweig, by contrast, is representative of the emerging generation of young scholars and has written a fascinating analysis of the growing importance of leisure for industrial workers, and how they used it, between 1870 and 1920.

Galenon's book shows there is still plenty of life left in the old-style narrative approach. He starts with predecessors of the United Brotherhood, like the Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia, in whose union hall the constitutional assembly met in 1778, and continues with the early years of the Brotherhood and the AFL. Peter J. McGuire was the dominant figure in this phase, but the really decisive personality was William L. Hutcheson, who became president in 1916.

This account is kinder to Hutcheson than many. He was the "tsar" of the Carpenters, an archetypal old-style business unionist who believed it was his job to sell labour and meant to

get the best price for it he could. America was richly endowed with timber, and wood had been used since the earliest days in expanding the nation through its use for construction, railroad cross-ties, locomotive fuel, pit-props and so on. One has only to look at the familiar frame-houses built in the generation when Hutcheson was growing up to see the importance of carpentry.

The union had established the principle from the outset that anything made of wood was carpenter's work. "God created the forests", went the old saying, "and he gave them to Bill Hutcheson." But when Hutcheson came to power that epoch was drawing to a close. Modern technology had substituted other materials for wood in, for example, the new war-industry of aircraft manufacture. Thus during the Hutcheson era the principle was amended: anything ever made of wood was carpenter's work. So the union fought for jurisdiction with the Amalgamated Wood Workers over lumbering and saw mills; with the Sheet Metal Workers over metal trim; with the Machinists over heavy machinery; with the Iron Workers over docks, piles and window frames.

The Carpenters were helped in all this by the fact that, apart from the United Mineworkers, they were the strongest member union of the AFL. Moreover, they weathered the lean years of the 1920s far better than the miners, whose union was practically bankrupted and broken by a series of disastrous strikes. Came the 1930s, though, and Hutcheson found himself on the defensive along with the other old-style craft unionists, resisting tooth-and-nail the efforts of industrial unionists, like John L. Lewis of the Mineworkers, to revolutionize American labour during the Depression by organizing semi-skilled and unskilled workers in mass production.

More than accident threw Hutcheson and Lewis, those two heavyweights of American labour, into conflict over the issue of industrial unionism. Like Dan Tobin, of the Teamsters, Hutcheson regarded ethnic minorities as "rubbish" and agreed with the New York labour leader who said, "My wife always knows what breed of foreigner I've been hanging around by the smell of my clothes." The famous fist-fight, when Lewis floored Hutcheson at the 1935 Atlantic City AFL convention, was the flashpoint of the whole dispute. The following day Lewis moved to launch the CIO, and though this was to trouble and quadruple union membership, it split the house of labour for twenty years and marked the end of Hutcheson's brand of labour leadership.

Since 1945 the Carpenters have had to meet the challenge of more technological innovation, and as this history draws to its close in the 1980s all American labour is on the retreat from the replacement of the old industrial manufacturing base of the economy by the growing white-collar service sector. Still, the story of the Carpenters at least has been one of progress. Tables designed to show the rise in real wages have to take account of shorter hours of work from the time when carpentry was seasonal so that in summer carpenters fre-

quently worked from dawn to sunset.

This is really the starting-point for Rosenzweig's analysis of how workers used their growing leisure between 1870 and 1920. His title comes from the demand for the eight-hour day, which would give workers an equal amount of leisure to spend as they wished. We all know vaguely about the rise of professional sport and, in Britain at least, the growth of railway excursions and seaside resorts to cater for this new leisure. But this study is much more subtle and sophisticated, dealing as it does with the rise of that potent symbol of ethnicity, the saloon. Yet the struggle which saloons created among politicians and reformers was only one of many. Public parks were another fertile source of friction between labour leaders, Progressives and the ethnic groups which both aspired to lead. Then came the commercialization of leisure and what the final chapter calls the journey "From rum shop

to Rialto" as workers turned to the movies to fill their leisure time.

Rosenzweig's findings are limited to the city of his sub-title, Worcester, Massachusetts, but, despite this, he is willing to make broad generalizations about the role, for example, of ethnicity. Weakening, in some respects, because it fostered rivalry rather than class-wide mobilization, ethnicity also gave strength because it provided shared experience and protection for workers thrown on hard times.

Galenon uses similar data to explain why unions like the Carpenters failed to evolve along European lines. Lacking a class-conscious, blue-collar labour force: facing a fluid political system; a rate of economic growth which limited the gains from collective bargaining; and a powerful and confident entrepreneurial class: is it any wonder the unions embraced capitalism rather than a socialist alternative?

# Downhill all the way

Esmond Wright

WILLIAM E. LEUCHTENBERG  
**In the Shadow of F.D.R.: From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan**  
 400pp. Cornell University Press. £17.  
 0 8014 138 77

William Leuchtenberg is a distinguished and genial American historian, whose *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* was a seminal work and properly honoured by the profession. Here - in what were originally lectures given at his alma mater, Cornell - he tackles the ambitious topic of F.D.R.'s impact on and significance for each of his successors, and he gives us a readable, opinionative, anecdotal, thoroughly annotated (there are eighty pages of notes and references) but in the end unsatisfactory survey. What must have been as *jeu d'esprit* a delight to listen to, just does not stand up to presentation as a piece of serious scholarship.

Harry Truman was, of all the post-Roosevelt Presidents, the most obviously in F.D.R.'s shadow, and always conscious of the obligations of filial piety. What we have here is a familiar litany of the contemporary criticisms, from F.D.R.'s surviving henchmen, of "Tom Pendergast's office-boy" (Pendergast was the political boss under whose aegis Truman entered politics). Truman's own considerable achievements are mentioned in one short paragraph, and even they omit reference to the Truman Doctrine and to the Korean War. He gets no credit for his superior insight into Stalin's intentions (did he not say himself that he always saw Stalin as "like Tom Pendergast") but he is blamed for the deterioration in US/USSR relations, which, it is implied, would not have occurred had F.D.R. still been there.

The essays on Eisenhower and Carter, on Nixon and Ford are especially cursory, under-

standably so in the case of the last two since they were clearly not in awe of, and made only ritual obeisance to, the memory of F.D.R. The most sympathetic study is that of President Johnson, since he was, of all of them, most clearly F.D.R.'s protégé, but even here there is inadequate appreciation paid to his and indeed to every individual President's wish to be his own man and to make his own mark, not least when he was as strong a personality and as dedicated a Texan and a Southerner as L.B.J. Leuchtenberg carefully notes that Kennedy in three years in office made reference to F.D.R. on no less than 107 public occasions, with F.D.R.'s biographer Arthur J. Schlesinger close alongside as speech-writer and mandarin-in-residence. Unfortunately, there is no study of the two real political heirs of F.D.R., Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey. The treatment of Ronald Reagan is cheap. He emerges here as a turncoat, with the saving grace of having acquired his rhetoric as a Rooseveltian New Dealer.

The book as a whole is neither detailed nor analytical enough; it is a gossipy retelling of the many references to F.D.R. culled from a mountain of research cards. (The legion of F.D.R.'s *aficionados* will use it gratefully for its spiky quotations, usefully assembled and dexterously linked together.) There is no attempt to explore the manifold problems which are, with all his greatness, Roosevelt's disturbing and continuing legacy: the size and cost of the welfare state (it was called "Relief" in the Master's day), the complicated nature of Federal-State relations, the burden of the defence of the Free World and the cost of maintaining the United Nations Organization, which has not been the real parliament of man F.D.R. dreamt it would be. Even if the searchlight which is played on each President is much too narrow in focus, William Leuchtenberg's book reminds us that no President since April 1945 has made an impact as powerful and pervasive on America and the world.

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# From the position of dissent

Paul Hamilton

**ROBERT F. GLECKNER**  
*Blake's Prelude*  
202pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £12.40.  
08018 28033  
**MORTON PALEY**  
*The Continuing City: William Blake's 'Jerusalem'*  
330pp. Oxford University Press. £30.  
0198128037  
**MINNA DOSKOW**  
*William Blake's 'Jerusalem'*  
283pp. Associated University Presses. £22.50.  
08386 30901  
**BRENDA S. WEBSTER**  
*Blake's Prophetic Psychology*  
325pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0333328477  
**STEWART CREHAN**  
*Blake in Context*  
364pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. £25.  
07171 13132

"Imitation is criticism". Blake informed Sir Joshua Reynolds posthumously. *Poetical Sketches*, printed in 1783, shows Blake educating himself both in and out of his immediate poetic heritage. His exercises in imitation of Spenser, Milton, Percy's *Reliques*, Thomson and others turn a conventional assimilation of received poetic forms, a late eighteenth-century apprenticeship in urbanity, into something strikingly premonitory of his later work. The poems are often awkward and strangely flat, but in a manner which suggests not immature bungling but creative, critical discontent. As Robert F. Gleckner puts it in *Blake's Prelude*, his study of *Poetical Sketches*, the poems show Blake contesting the whole "idea of imitation", and so beginning his highly individual and polemically idiosyncratic struggle against dominant conceptions of the literary.

Since such conceptions were founded ultimately on biblical and classical precedents, it was those origins which Blake boldly determined to imagine anew, thus incidentally rendering redundant the educative logic of imitation. Morton Paley describes in *The Continuing City* how Blake's appropriation of biblical language in *Jerusalem* "goes far beyond mere imitation" to recast it in "new forms of utterance". Alexander Gilchrist wrote in his biography of Blake that no man had been "so literally the author of his own book"; and Blake's illustrations of his own and others' works often attempt to control or even repudiate images raised by the words he uses. The teddy-bear tiger in the engraving of the famous *Song of Experience* is typical: its tameness forces the reader back to "The Tyger" to look for the infernal sense which, Blake's image suggests, exists at a remove from the stock response of horror.

The gains and losses of persisting in these ordinary ambitions ought to be apparent to Blake's readers; however, they are not. Predictably, many critics regarded Blake's eccentricity as disqualifying him from comparison with the figures composing the central literary tradition. "The Latin tradition" as T.S. Eliot called it in his essay on Blake. After the work of S. Foster Damon, others tended to stress the coherence of the Blakean alternative and its possible sources in a cultural community largely ignored by mainstream literary history, just as engravers like Blake had been excluded from the Royal Academy despite being members of its precursor, the Society of Artists. Yeats thought that Blake's "perennial philosophy" belonged to an élite of the imagination, an ascendancy privileged by its own sense of election. But it has been more plausibly argued that Blake's sectarian mode of writing pushes the reader into a political stance different from that tacitly assumed by social classes which can regard their own forms of literary expression as being culturally central. According to this view, when Blake is obliged to use commonly accepted categories he deploys them ironically, and when he does not, his obscurity is frequently the accurate expression of the experience of being politically marginal. For Blake, the main intellectual tradition, untransformed in imagination, masks with equal deliberation the character experience wears when viewed from his position of dissent.

In *The Continuing City*, Paley worries about the critical licence allowed to Blake by this defence of his work as "a seamless garment in which even what appear to be faults are part of an overarching unity". Blake himself seems to have been discouraged by the increasing obscurity generated by his polemical mode. The deletions in his address "To The Public" at the start of *Jerusalem* suggest his loss of confidence in a readership whose goodwill he formerly prized and thought he could possess. Gleckner's book assumes the "seamless" defence, but he presents the substance of Blake's critique of imitation entirely in terms of a disaffected literariness sealed off from Blake's wider, one might say basic, concerns. Blake is attuned to "a verbal line", running from the Bible through Spenser and Milton, which allows him to echo previous writers, but in a way which disrupts any potential literary continuity between them and him.

Gleckner argues that Blake's *Poetical Sketches*, like Wordsworth's *Prelude*, is complete in spite of its inconclusive title and in spite of its imitative manner. It is *Jerusalem* which Paley compares to *The Prelude*, making one wonder at the ingenuity of a reading of Blake's *Sketches*, such as Gleckner's, which neither sees Wordsworth's as the more finished poem nor allows *Jerusalem* any pre-eminence in Blake's own canon. Certainly Blake once remarked of one of his own drawings that it proved "that the productions of our youth and of our age are equal in all essential points". Yet, as Paley shows, this did not inhibit him in his continual revisions of passages of *Jerusalem*, possibly with an ear to the finer details of a prosody drawn from the Bible (especially as poetically conceived by scholars like Robert Lowth), from James MacPherson's writings and bearing comparison with Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*. Paley acknowledges that as a narrative *Jerusalem* is "unsuccessful" and "patchwork". His book patiently and learnedly builds up a case for discounting "the seeming disunity which all readers notice in *Jerusalem*", and for finding in Blake's poem the image of a city continuing a tradition going back to Ezekiel and on to Joyce.

The main difficulty for the reader of *Jerusalem* lies in trying to make the coherence of Blake's myth match the coherence of his work. *Jerusalem* records the restoration of the giant Albion to his emanation, Jerusalem, in a sexual harmony which is the pattern for a new cosmic equilibrium. However, the unity thus achieved is at the expense of almost all the received definitions of individuality out of which we assume our world to be constructed. "All Human Forms identified even Tree, Metal Earth & Stone". Absolute unity, a quite unreasonable democracy eliding the most common-sense of distinctions, is Blake's most subversive idea; a community of imaginative energy which will replace the hierarchies of sciences and society. In her straightforward and helpful commentary, *William Blake's Jerusalem*, Minna Doskow sees this conclusion as a simple anti-realist or idealist claim that the world is shaped entirely in accordance with the provisional state of human knowledge. This stops short of the imaginative and political implications of Blake's vision. He does not merely oppose the reification of nature by science but argues that, since the shape of things is up to us, the best world is one imagined as a city providing a coherent focus for a hitherto fragmented psyche. One might expect Los's visionary city of Golgonooza to provide an illustrative parallel to Jerusalem, but the events in Los's imaginative and in Albion's political experience are not strictly differentiated. Art and life are not kept apart in a relation of cause to effect or of inspiration to action. Blake's myth of "Human Forms identified" throws his own work *en abyme*, dissolves any notion of narrative sequence, and leaves the reader to look instead for what Paley calls "the interrelationships of its parallel acts, its synchrony, in order to illustrate *Jerusalem* by *Jerusalem*".

Doskow, spatializing Paley's "synchronic" interpretation, compares reading *Jerusalem* to using different lenses in a microscope: "although an apparently new picture springs into view, however, there is really nothing new there at all". In *Blake's Prophetic Psychology*, though, Brenda S. Webster deprecates a tendency to "submit" to Blake's "obscurifying" rightfully imposed tests of one's worthiness as a

reader". She views the unity, which Blake so strenuously imagines, as regressive: "reconstructed time and space . . . re-establish the egocentric world of infant thought". The motives depicted by the striving "Giant forms" of Blake's prophetic books are primarily incestuous; and the main losers in Blake's alternative, visionary world are women. Blake describes women almost entirely in terms of male sexual need, and yet he regards their role in sexual relations as an inferior, degrading one which, if inflicted on a man, would constitute a violent attack. Any initiative on the part of the "female Will" turns her into a phallic woman threatening the violation which Blake would prefer to have her suffer. (On the dust-jacket of Webster's book, Catherine Blake's drawing of her resolute, tight-lipped husband displaces the usual glowing face of Thomas Phillips's better-known portrait.)

Dr Webster takes a harder feminist line than Diana Hume George's recent *Blake and Freud*. She is repelled by the violence suffered by female characters in the early works, and deeply suspicious of Los's solution in *Jerusalem*: "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be, when Albion arises from his dread repose". The male continues to furnish the sexual standard, but now enriched by his appropriation of useful female characteristics. Webster's reading is far from being reductive. She is acutely sensitive to the psychology of Blake's visual art and to the sexual logic of its metamorphosing images. She deciphers the half-erased erotic exchanges which people the corners of Blake's notebooks and feeds their explicit preoccupations into the texts instead of using the textual referents to prescribe the limits of interpretation. Blake's ability to turn imitation into criticism, slipping outside inherited patterns of aesthetic understanding, allows him to confront his experience more directly, in a manner more alive to its controlling unconscious urges. For Webster, his psychology therefore becomes prophetic of a psychoanalytic understanding of what is disguised or masked by the conscious patina or dream-work of conventional iconography. Yet, and this is perhaps the most interesting point Webster makes, the closer Blake draws to the unconscious, the more reactionary he becomes. It is usually assumed that an increasingly Christian idiom damps down the radicalism of the later Blake; but Webster's work suggests that it is Blake's original forays in self-analysis which are riddled with wounds he cannot heal and with tortures he cannot forego. Blake's progressive desire for unity is psychoanalysed into an incestuous wish for union with his mother which, unable to give up the investment in patriarchy inscribed on his

psychology, he paradoxically must try to thwart. Like Los, he hates fathers but fears sons. *Jerusalem* exemplifies his self-contradictory position: a poem in which he "expresses his ambivalence by a form of sabotage" resulting in "rhetorical chaos". Webster's reading is sustained and challenging; but she does not propound a positive feminist alternative to Freudianism, an alternative of which Blake's psychology ought to have been prophetic. This leaves her analysis at the point where Hume George's begins: the need to weigh the justice of Blake's attempts to describe "the ways in which women not only submitted to their own denigration but helped it along", against the charge that his views "really were culture-specific, and therefore of only very limited use". Webster does not press Hume George's question. Here Blake remains hamstrung because she only permits the truthfulness of his imagination to reveal a failure of vision. She always assumes that the meaning of Blake's prophetic books is fundamentally psychological, and so does not consider the success with which he uses mental conflicts to dramatize the lost dilemma of his profession, his class and his country - parlous circumstances which he eventually hoped would be temporary. The poem to envisage his psychology dramatized in public events points to his awareness of his historical relativity, but in socio-political terms which are never allowed precedence in Webster's discussion.

Stewart Crehan's *Blake in Context* strikes one as cruder than these other more specialized studies. However, Crehan's book, although ominously cast as a "background" study, strives for the range of interest demanded by Blake's minutest particulars. He sometimes simplifies the relations between art and ideology, not allowing enough for the mixed nature of literary allegiances, but he recreates the oppositional quality of Blake's art in persuasive detail. He is superficial, by recent standards of criticism, on Blake's *Songs*, but he ends with an interesting critique of *Jerusalem* both as a utopian lapse, under severe historical pressures, from the revolutionary idiom of *Four Zoas*, and as a historical transition from millenarianism to socialism. Above all he grasps that Blake's hatred of empiricism is not in some purely philosophical commitment but in his overriding sense that experience costs; that it is not the unsolicited bounty of mere living but is often "bought with the price of all that a man hath". What Blake saw with biblical assurance in the class-struggle of his day is now clearly applicable to the Third World where Stewart Crehan teaches. His admiration for Blake could not be more apt.

## Presenting the past

Emma Letley

**HARRY E. SHAW**  
*The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and his successors*  
257pp. Cornell University Press. £21.25.  
08014 115926

"Why do the finest historical novels, with the single exception of *War and Peace*, seem flawed when compared with the best standard fiction?" In his stimulating and demystifying book, Harry Shaw explores this question. Historical novels seem to be flawed because the criteria with which they are evaluated are irrelevant or inadequate. Measured by standard (non-structuralist) criteria, they are inevitably reduced to the status of (for example) poor psychological novels or ill-executed *Bildungsromane*. Invoking Johnson's comments on the dangers of inappropriate generic expectations (he who read Richardson for the story would hang himself), Shaw demonstrates the specific but unrecognized strategies and structures of the sub-genre.

Taking issue with Lukács, he contends that history as process: aesthetic value can, quite legitimately, inhere in the presentation of "the past as past"; and he argues cogently that there is an inverse relationship between the contemporaneity of setting in Scott's work and its value as historical literature.

Analysing history as pastoral, as a source of drama, and, most significantly, as subject, his discussion also illuminates novels by Balzac, France, Hugo, Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot and Tolstoy. Both Scott and Tolstoy refuse to reduce history to a symbolic structure, to myth or epistemology. They differ, however, in their formal solutions to representing "the spectrum of human life". Scott's pre-eminent strength is as he shifts the main focus away from the individual, lies in his depiction of that clouded area where "individual behavior shades over into social and cultural norms and practices, seems a specifically historical phenomenon".

Shaw's corrective to character-centred criticism is rigorous: it is misguided to read *Waverley* as a novel about Edward Waverley, and Jeanie Deans is problematic only if she is judged on psychological grounds rather than in terms of the action in which she is implicated. Scott simply does not have this kind of interest in central protagonists. (He is not writing *Pride and Prejudice* or *Middlemarch*.)

This study is European in focus; it measures up to MacDiarmid's desired standards of "world-poetry as a whole" and avoids the parochialism that can bedevil exclusively Scott criticism. On occasion, Shaw's omission of relevant national considerations creates problems, as when he makes de-contextualized comments on the Scottish language. But, in general, this is an excellent book which suggests fresh (and wise) criteria for appropriate not only Scott but historical fiction as a whole.

# Art comes to Hollywood

D. J. Wenden

**RICHARD SCHICKEL**  
*D. W. Griffith and the birth of film*  
612pp. Michael Joseph. £15.  
0807516475

"Don't write and then they won't have anything on you" D.W. Griffith advised his cameraman Billy Bitzer, a precept that for much of his life, and especially his early life, he followed himself. His papers in the Museum of Modern Art contain poems, plays, stories and an unfinished autobiography, but little of direct biographical value before 1920. The autobiography was dictated, or recounted, to a young journalist in 1938-9 who soon realized that Griffith "was not dictating pages, but was rehearsing and directing scenes out of his past. If the 'scene' didn't fit, he would alter or delete it." There is little contemporary evidence against which it can be checked. The record of his first forty years from 1875 to 1915 is largely concocted from his sometimes contradictory reminiscences, three chapters of a biography begun by Braverman in 1940, and the books, articles and interviews contributed by his studio colleagues. The earliest, by his first wife Arvidson, was published in 1925. Much is dated after Griffith's death in 1948 and is filled with the unverifiable anecdote that plagues all film historians. Richard Schickel has struggled to produce an accurate story despite the difficulty of separating fact from fiction. He is on much sounder ground when he can use the records of Griffith's own company and of United Artists in the 1920s.

D.W. Griffith presents a second major problem for film historians. His importance cannot be denied. He developed, even if he did not invent, nearly all the crucial technical and artistic developments in the medium from 1908 to 1918. In Schickel's words, he was "the first to conceive of movies as - potentially - an art

form, and the first to hold consistently to that belief long enough to make a series of practical experiments aimed at realizing that potential". In 1914-15 he created - for he was undoubtedly a film "auteur" - two landmarks in the history of cinema, *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*. Before that he had directed hundreds - in 1909 alone 151 - of shorts for the Biograph company that some cineastes rate as superior to his epics, just as many prefer Chaplin's two-reelers to his full-length features. But it is not easy to explain the origins of Griffith's talent, the source of his visual imagination.

Of the other major figures in the evolution of the silent cinema only Erich von Stroheim seems to pose a comparable problem. We can pinpoint crucial features in the rest. Lumière was an inventor and an observant cameraman; Méliès transferred the magic of the theatre to the screen; Chaplin built on his music-hall-miming and meticulous observation of human behaviour; Eisenstein was the cinema's first intellectual; Lang and Murnau had graduated in architecture and philosophy. All brought an identifiable talent to the new medium that they created and embellished. Griffith possessed no obvious artistic stock-in-trade except a short unsuccessful career in third-rate American theatre and Schickel found "no evidence that he ever took the slightest interest in new developments in literature, painting, music".

Schickel's biography does not solve this mystery. He offers a convincing psychological explanation for Griffith's obsession with pure, winsome young women (the Lillian Gish syndrome) and his attempts to defile that purity, "his endless preoccupation with fates worse than death". The summaries that are given of Griffith's stories and plays make dire reading and the poem "The Wild Duck" printed in full is even worse. Far from being a great dramatist *manqué*, Griffith was an indifferent actor-playwright who stumbled into a primitive art form that was ready for the limited gifts and outrageous ambition he brought to it.

## No vestal virgin she

Craig Brown

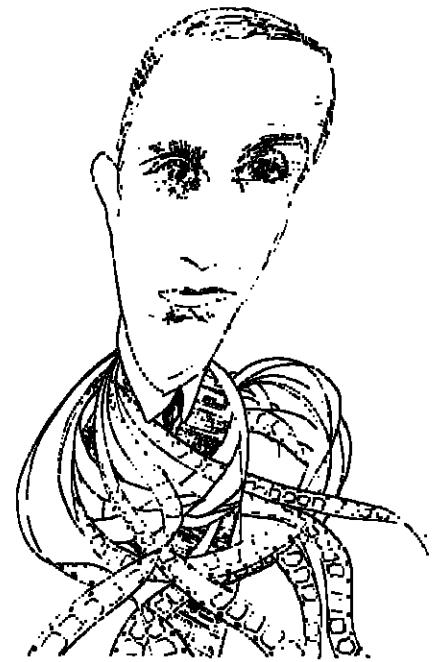
**GEORGE BELLS and STANLEY MUSGROVE**  
*Mae West*  
351pp. Robson Books. £9.95.  
08051241

In recent years, there have been various attempts to tarnish the image of Mae West. Unsubstantiated rumours, based on speculation and innuendo, have suggested that she lived and died a virgin. With their entertaining biography of Miss West, George Bells and Stanley Musgrove have stopped any future Hollywood gossip who unscrupulously wish to whiten her name.

Miss West allowed her life to be the subject of such speculation - other charges included frigidity and hermaphroditism - because she herself would constantly re-arrange her own history. She would alter not only the year of her birth (1893) but also the class and nationality of her parents. At one point, her mother was a Frenchwoman called Matilda Diker, and then she was a Delker-Doolger from Württemberg. Her father was now a boxer, now the founder of private detective agency, and now a doctor from Richmond Hill. Their religion was alternately Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic.

Mae West's career began as a child star in vaudeville, singing songs like "Doing the Grizzly Bear", a title that takes on some ambiguity when one discovers that her first, somewhat premature, erotic dream involved a bear with a four-inch penis. "I was modest in my demands," she later recollected. The great joy of her life must have been the ease with which her public and private characters coalesced. Indeed, there was virtually no difference between them. When, as a teenager, she began to see a lot of Joseph Schenck, the leader of a vaudeville band, her mother encouraged her to see more of other men. Within weeks, she had affairs with all six musicians in the band. Her love of sex was limited only by her constant need for a new partner, and this desire for novelty must have helped maintain the battling ferocity with which she always spoke of the

Schickel's account of the early career adds little to what we know already. However, he provides a complete record of the making of *The Birth of a Nation* and its reception. He is outraged by Griffith's racism, which he judges from a current viewpoint rather than in relation to a Southerner born almost within earshot of the Civil War. The biography dispels



the assertion that *Intolerance* was made by Griffith in response to the outburst aroused by his earlier epic. He did not set out to refute the charge of racism, but to make a film as grandiose as the Italian *Cabiria*, and built up a little picture, *The Mother and the Law*, into the unwieldy *Intolerance*. The addition of the Fall of Babylon, the Life of Christ, and the St Bartholomew Massacre to the melodramatic *The Mother and the Law* was almost as haphazard in its conception as in its execution.

After 1917 the evidence becomes more secure and throws a new light on Griffith's financial operations and production methods, indicating that he was substantially the architect of his own decline. The turning point in his career was not, as is often suggested, the industry's and public's indifference to *Intolerance*, but his own decision to leave Hollywood, already the capital of the motion picture industry, and move east to a studio he built at Mamaroneck on Long Island Sound. In the pre-war ambience of Mamaroneck he enjoyed

being the film equivalent of the great actor-manager impresario, but was unable to produce a regular flow of profitable features to cover the overheads of this studio within a mansion. Chaplin at this time could finance his own company, in his own studio, and enjoy the luxury of ever-lengthening intervals between his films, stretching from sixteen months to three years. But Chaplin's casts and sets were modest beside those of Griffith, and Charlie had an irresistible formula and a star performer. The stars whom Griffith had developed stayed on in California drawing salaries he could not match. Schickel reveals the details of Griffith's financial dealings with United Artists, which he had helped to found, and with Paramount's Adolph Zukor, whose contract offered Griffith financial salvation. Far from being the innocent victim of unscrupulous money-men who moved into the industry he had created, and ignored or misused his genius, he emerges as an extravagant, wilful man destroying his own career just as von Stroheim did in the same period.

Schickel provides a fair, unblinking picture of Griffith's life after his last disastrous film, *The Struggle*, in 1931, living partly in Hollywood, but in exile from the studios. Until the final three years he was better off, and happier (or less unhappy) than he and others have led us to believe. By 1933 he had secured reasonable terms for his departure from United Artists and from the burden of Mamaroneck at the height (or depth) of the Depression. Schickel considers that "the legend of D.W. Griffith's noble insolvency in the cause of art" has been much exaggerated in the telling. Sadly the unexpected award in 1935 of a special Oscar for "distinguished creative achievements as director and producer" was prompted as much by political moves within the Academy of Motion Pictures as by an urge to recognize his achievements. The Award ceremonies were under threat of a boycott from the Screen Actors, Directors and Writers Guilds. It was hoped that sentiment and curiosity about Griffith would persuade many to defy the boycott and appear at the auditorium.

The closing years in Los Angeles before his death in July 1948 were pathetic. His long-suffering second wife abandoned him and he ended in drink and distress in the Knickerbocker Hotel. He was essentially rootless. "at home only in hotel lobbies and movie stages" in Lillian Gish's phrase. Richard Schickel has written the definitive account of Griffith's career.

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# She of the black blown hair

David Profumo

GEORGE MACKAY BROWN  
*Time in a Red Coat*  
249pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press. £8.95.  
07011 28046  
*Three Plays*  
149pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press. £7.95.  
07011 27422

For a man who has himself rarely ventured beyond the Pentland Firth, whose writing to date has practically all been set in his native Orkneys, George Mackay Brown is certainly adventurous in casting the action of his third novel across thousands of years and thousands of miles. Not that his representation of human behaviour has ever been insular; it is consistently underpinned by a sense of history and myth, and given coherence by the iconography of Mackay Brown's Catholic faith. "Time" has been a constant fascination, and he is notoriously sceptical about modern notions of progress; his fiction delves into the past, unravelling linear concepts of time and seeking to relate isolated episodes to archetypes. "Time is not a conflagration; it is a slow grave sequence of grassblade, fish, apple, star, snowflake", he wrote in *Greenvoe* (1972), his first novel, and in the long title story from his collection *Hawthall* (1974) a fisherman experiences exactly this sense of time as he is reborn through the centuries. His latest book *Time in a Red Coat* develops the idea.

It is a fable that begins with a birth. Deep in the past, in an Eastern country violated by Mongol hordes, a princess is born under the eyes of two guardians who bequeath to her an ivory flute and a bag of coins. Barely ageing from the time she reaches maturity until the very end of the saga, this mysterious dark maiden treks through centuries of history on the trail of the Dragon war, passing through many places (Hungary, Russia, Spain) blighted by its violent fire. The strange, thumbric activities of this wandering girl take their toll on her purity, however, and the white coat in which she starts her long journey is gradually besmirched and singed, so that by the time her goal is reached the stigmata of human folly have turned it red.

Like D.H. Lawrence in his stories, Mackay Brown has a penchant for ritualistic action which, when it is successful, can be at once

stylized and affecting. *Time in a Red Coat* is composed of recurrent figures and shapes (spiritual symbols, elemental motifs) which remove the need for extensive historical realism. But although Brown conjures his themes – the power of honesty, the meaning of suffering, fertility as miracle – in a way that is often moving, certain episodes have their dynamism reduced by his attachment to the ceremonial. "Ceremony makes everything bearable and beautiful for us", he wrote in his story "The Tarn and the Rosary", and so indeed it may, but in literature it can merely slow things up. Generally, Brown escapes being laborious, but sometimes this novel seems to march on the spot.

Sustaining the myth while staving off the fairy-tale is necessary in this type of rarified fiction. Seeking to revitalize the archetypes of folk narrative – the journey, the final battle, the magician – Brown's tale runs the risk of dishing up Tolkien rather than T. S. Eliot: it is just plausible that there are dwarves in the mountain, but when we hear "It is she of the black blown hair who comes to the table of the young men to collect their empty mugs" the business begins to smack of sword and sorcery. There may be only occasional lapses of this kind, and only a few plunges into mawkishness, but they are failures of touch in a book so ambitiously conceived.

Brown's strongly metaphoric language is the backbone of his fiction, and one is constantly impressed by the way he runs together the textures of poetry and prose. In numerous local instances the writing has a distinctive shine, and for these the novel is memorable. The flaws of *Time in a Red Coat* are inherent in its scale: Brown is consistently better as a poet and a writer of short stories, and perhaps at the heart of this novel there is a collection of short stories uneasily run together. There is a distracting effect, too, in the sporadic authorial interpolations which, like the odd anachronistic detail, are presumably designed to dismantle the sense of narrative time. They do so, but with little subtlety. The book's crowning chapter boldly achieves the same aim through a surrealistic survey of martial events past, present and future, that collapses most conventions and is the novel's imaginative tour de force.

Clarity of image and a lively ear for speech being his principal talents as a stylist, Brown has much to recommend him as a playwright. His material and his language are nicely interchangeable, too, his poems being unusually

close to speech and his stage-directions often unperformably poetic ("the burn is supple with trout"). With the contents of *Three Plays* we are back on familiar, Orkadian territory, but there are connections with the concerns and procedures of the novels. In fact, *The Loom of Light*, which treats the martyrdom of Magnus Erlendson, a ruler of twelfth-century Orkney, was effectively the *ur*-version of his second novel, *Magnus* (1973), and is a fine example of Brown's confident inventiveness as regards unity of time in the drama, the action vaulting blithely forward by years between scenes, crossed by wider correspondences that bind them together. The alliterative language of the "Chorus" here recalls *Murder in the Cathedral*, and there is a similar robust sense of the older dramatic tradition behind it.

## Man trouble

Savkar Altinel

JOAN CHASE  
*During the Reign of the Queen of Persia*  
215pp. Virago. £8.95.  
086068 536 5  
ANGELA HUTH  
*Wanting*  
233pp. Harvill Press. £8.95.  
000 271906 1  
ZOE FAIRBAIRNS  
*Here Today*  
234pp. Methuen. £7.95.  
0413 53080 9

Man trouble is common to these three books, which feature women made miserable by men in one way or another. Joan Chase's *During the Reign of the Queen of Persia* concerns three generations of women living on an Ohio farm presided over by a matriarch known variously as "Gram", "Queenie" and the "Queen of Persia". The narrative is divided into five more or less self-contained parts, although most deal with an unsatisfactory relationship between one of the women and a man, and three are further linked by the presence in each of the same dying character.

This awkward arrangement makes the book something more than a collection of short stories without quite turning it into a novel. The choice, for narrator, of the "collective female consciousness" of the four teenage girls who make up the youngest generation, with the consequent use of the first person plural throughout, is something of an innovation. Otherwise, though, the book belongs equally to two different but well-established American literary traditions: a predominantly Southern tradition obsessed with family quarrels, illness and suffering, or, as Gram herself puts it, "dying and fighting . . . work and craziness"; and a Northern tradition of mellow nostalgia that stretches from Fitzgerald to Edmund White. The author's inability to decide which of these she really favours only adds to the book's formlessness, and the occasional lyrical passages, beautiful as they are, fail to make up for the complete absence of humour.

Humour abounds in *Wanting*, Angela Huth's first novel for some years. Harry Antlers, a grotesquely fat and ugly British theatre director working on Broadway, falls madly in love with the beautiful Viola Windrush when she arrives from England for an audition, and follows her back to her native Norfolk only to discover that for years she has been in love with Richard Almond, who cannot bring himself to leave his wife Sonia – a mental patient given to uttering misquotations like "Now more than ever it seems ripe to die" in a conversational tone of voice. Meanwhile, Viola's childhood friend Maisie is still pining for Viola's brother Gideon, now living in New York with his glamorous mistress Hannah Bagle, a head buyer of underwear with a famous department store, who finds Harry cute. All the opportunities for comedy such a tangled web affords are exploited to the full; there is even a moment of farce when Harry, crazed by rejection, forces his way into a house in London that is being decorated by Viola for her uncle.

Huth makes some effort to convince the reader that underneath all this there is real

Overturning temporal conventions is fundamental to *The Well*, a fertility play that shows Brown's fondness for multiple viewpoint. Here, successive generations circulate around an island well, the traditional values and ceremonies it embodies being replaced in the end by the modern "advance" of a mass system. Its arrival prompts the Keeper of the Well to a hymn against progress. The thirtyday radio piece, is a symbolic religious drama with a tough poetic quality: there are few people writing plays of this type at the moment, and it is a distinctive achievement. There is something of the Townley plays here, but there is also a marked resemblance to Yeats – an independence of tone which is the result of a skilled writer flensing the language down to its bones.

pain, the pain that comes from wanting other people's love; but, despite an ending which leaves everything unresolved, she cannot quite pull off the Stevie Smith trick of endowing the ridiculous with pathos, and does not seem ready to want to. One of the minor characters in the novel is an expert on moths named Edna Hardley, a pleasant, well-mannered young man, known as "Hardly There" to his friend, who prefers "more local" problems to the ones he finds lurking in the depths of his soul during his rare excursions to those parts, and who shows such lightness of touch in everything that on one occasion he makes love to Viola without her even noticing. *Wanting* itself is similarly pleasant and endearing, but ultimately also rather light and evasive.

With their comical names and moth-like senses Huth's characters are little more than caricatures, yet they have a certain life of their own. Superficiality is so much Zoe Fairbairns' problem in *Here Today* that this quasi-fairytale about two London temps (young, fun-loving Antonia and the older, more sober Catherine) looking for a third who has disappeared into mysterious circumstances almost seems inspired by Thackeray's playful suggestion that authors could try to pick up a little extra cash by slipping some advertising into their work. Flora, the *Guardian*, Dettol, Yardley, Sweet 'n' Low, Honey, the *Tailer*, Listerine, Blue Band, Night Nurse, *Options*, *Clean-Fix*, *Frish*, *Spare Rib*, Colgate, Cariba, Coke, the *Standard*, Gumption, the *Holiday Whisk*, Silk Cut, One-Cal, Benson and Hedges, *Thump* and the *TLS* are only some of the products, brand-names and publications mentioned in the course of two hundred-odd pages. The same grab-life-by-the-labels approach is also evident in the bang-up-to-date themes: extramarital relationships, herpes, unemployment, computer technology, the right to belong to a trade union, racism, urban violence, sexual harassment at work and the unreliability of package-tour operators.

Beneath the glibness, though, there is a devastating innocence which keeps breaking through and imparting an unintentional hilarity to perfectly serious passages, as when Antonia, finally abandoned by her husband because of her promiscuity, contemplates masturbation ("She thought of stuff she'd read about doing it to yourself. Well of course I can, she thought in bewilderment, but what would that solve?"), or Catherine worries about her eating habits:

She thought a lot about food . . . and ate rather less. Her knowledge of nutritional theory was more influential over her choice of meals than any appetite or preference . . . Sometimes she wondered if she might be suffering from anorexia nervosa, she was certainly very thin, but she was conscious of no desire to be so. She wasn't repelled by food, it just didn't interest her. Even her stern resolution to eat a pound of mussels each morning fell into disuse when a mouse from the stone-ground oats broke one of her teeth, necessitating several trips to the dentist.

Perhaps, though, it isn't Ms Fairbairns who should be blamed for all this. It is no secret that her last novel, *Stand We At Last*, was much influenced by tripartite discussions between herself, her agent and her publisher. Maybe it was her new publisher's desire to find an unexplored female teenage market that drove her to this curious new exercise? Certainly if there is any way she can disclaim responsibility for it, she should try.

## Truths and half-truths

Keith Barker

GINA WILSON  
*All Ends Up*  
159pp. Faber. £6.25.  
0571 13196 4

Gina Wilson has always seemed content to remain out of the mainstream of writing for young people. She does not set out to be a popular writer and this may explain why none of her books has been issued in paperback (not even her first most immediately approachable novel, *Cora Ravenwing*). For where most writers for adolescents seem to use their books as a means of airing controversial contemporary issues, Wilson continues to write her skilfully crafted character studies which have the timeless themes of evil, jealousy, friendship and emotional growth. She is like one of those master builders such as N.C.Hunter and Terence Rattigan who continued to write conventional plays at a time of great experiment in the theatre. Gina Wilson's novels are old-fashioned in feel and could be set at any period after the war (apart from a scattering of four-

letter words.) One example of this is the Christian names she chooses; the heroine of her last book was called Lily while the three protagonists of *All Ends Up* are named Claudia, Sylvie and Anna; hardly typical girls' names of the 1980s.

*All Ends Up* is as much concerned with the lives of adults as it is with those of its three main adolescent characters. The attitudes and foibles of the parents are shown as a powerful influence in shaping the girls' characters. Claudia's mother, Fern, is despised by her daughter for bringing her up not knowing who her father is. Claudia is a child of anger, an anger displayed in her spiteful remarks about what she calls her mother's "loose morals" and in her contempt for her schoolfriends. Anna, Claudia's best friend, is neurotically eager to please, an attitude fostered by her unstable mother. Even Sylvie, the newcomer to the group, has a strange relationship with her two brothers: she becomes overprotective when both become attracted to Claudia. *All Ends Up* demonstrates the warping effect that the half-truths told by adults can have on adolescents. Claudia's mother hides the fact of her Aunt Belle's illness from her and this provokes a hysterical response from both Anna and

Claudia and Claudia's dramatic refusal to accept the middle-aged librarian, Wilf Smee, as a stepfather is partly due to the fact that she has not been told the complete truth earlier in the affair.

The plot is complex, perhaps too complex for the reader's belief to be sustained. The strong feelings and painful way in which the characters, both adolescent and adult, face reality are well drawn, but Gina Wilson makes things hard for herself by not producing one child character with whom the young reader can identify. Anna is too ineffectual, while Sylvie is little more than a cipher. Claudia may be loved by her friends for her vigour and wit but the reader loses patience with her acerbic attitudes after a while. The reader's main sympathies are often extended to the adult characters.

*All Ends Up* does not mark a large advance in Gina Wilson's writing but it is both touching and amusing and it is intelligently constructed. It is reminiscent of some of Susan Hill's novels, particularly *Gentleman and Ladies*, in its portrayal of raw emotions submerged beneath a veneer of respectability and this may make it a useful bridge between "children's" literature and adult fiction.

## In the cage

Stephen Mills

WILLIAM HORWOOD  
*Callanish*  
192pp Allen Lane. £6.95.  
07139 1684 2

*Callanish* is a thoughtful children's book, the economically told story of a youthful golden eagle called Creggan torn from the distant cliffs of Cape Wrath and put into a cage at London Zoo. At first he is paralysed with terror, but gradually he sees that the occupants of other cages are, most of them, brain-dead, pacing their cells all day in figures of eight or staring through the bars in anticipation of the next free meal. But Creggan's neighbour, Minch, is an ancient bird of his own species from the holy site of the Isle of Callanish. She coaches him in the importance of spirit, of faith in the principle of freedom, of never forgetting his birth-place and of never allowing comfort to eradicate consciousness.

Minch's wisdom sustains a nucleus of other inmates of the raptor cages. These include Woll, a buzzard who sucks up constantly to the zoo keepers. One day Woll creates a clever diversion and, to everyone's amazement, glides out of his cage. Sadly, once free, he can-

not make up his mind which way to fly and, confused by the sudden need to take decisions, he allows himself to be recaptured. Minch teaches Creggan and the other companions to respect Woll for his cunning and to learn from his mistakes. Yet when Creggan's cage is damaged in a storm he too hesitates before the immensity of the sky and the formlessness of a world without bars. He does escape, however and the exhaustion of his first flight, the wonder of his first wild dawn and his consternation when the wild birds furiously mob him are all well described.

Creggan's progress northwards is chronicled by newspaper reports until men lose track of him in Scotland. No one expects him to survive in the wild, but as his strength and skill increase, he discovers he has a quality that wild eagles lack. For faith in the Callanish spirit, so fiercely nurtured in him by Minch, has waned in the wild. Creggan finds a mate, defends a territory, rears a chick. But he is always haunted by the duty he owes to his incarcerated friends. Two years later he returns to the cages determined either to share his freedom with them or to relinquish it altogether. In the event he does both, with a happy outcome.

*Callanish* is a rather cerebral little tale. It eschews humour and any irrelevant variety in

its adventures. Instead, William Horwood keeps our attention focused on the central issue, the meaning of liberty, and his eagles are more than adequate both as characters and as symbols of freedom – the human concept of freedom that is. The book only runs into trouble if it is to be regarded as something more than a story. The publishers are advertising *Callanish* as a contribution to the current debate on zoos. But we have no more idea about how an eagle feels in captivity after reading it than we did before. We only know how a human being would feel if he were pretending to be an eagle. In any case, the moral environment inhabited by talking animals tends, with a few notable exceptions, to be too sparsely furnished to deal with real controversies. In endowing one species with a human type of consciousness it is usually necessary to dehumanize its enemies and its prey. In *Callanish*, for example, hooded crows are wicked and merit instant death and we are not encouraged to expect a funeral every time the hero eagle kills a rabbit. If Horwood's eagles are to be judged as humans, then it could be fairly argued that they are a murderous bunch of psychopaths who definitely need locking up. But only the foolish among us will dwell on this aspect of the novel. The children will get on and enjoy the story.

## L is for life-style

Kate Flint

SHIRLEY HUGHES  
*Lucy and Tom's a. b. c.*  
Gollancz. £3.95.  
01570 0398 3

Lucy and Tom are already familiar from four of Shirley Hughes's earlier picture books. Here, vignettes of their everyday activities – shopping with their mother; going to the playground, having a bedtime story read to them – are used to illustrate each letter of the alphabet. The first page shows them self-referentially absorbed in their own book, identifying nouns, acrobats and artists while munching apples and apricots. Finally, "z is for zoo, of course".

The "of course" highlights some of the book's problems. On the one hand, some children are bound to find a comforting familiarity in the pailpots and brickblocks of the nursery school, in the packets of biscuits and honey pot on the tea table, in the trains and teddy bears. Others may find this well-equipped home, with its tasteful pastel walls, its dresser and chest of drawers, its forays into Cohan-land, decidedly unlike their own. There is plenty of stress on activity, from colouring in and skipping to dressing up (girls) and sailing yachts on the pond (largely boys), but there is also a decided stress on consumer durables. Perhaps those who identify less readily with the life depicted

will suffer most strongly from the unintended implications of that "of course". For the book is dully uninventive. Even the odd twitches of naughtiness on the part of Lucy and Tom – surprising their father with an empty eggshell at breakfast, Tom's jumping on the furniture, having tactfully taken off his shoes, are tame. Where are the aardvarks and anteaters, the goats and gnats and gnus which make other alphabet books fun?

Who, indeed, is this alphabet book intended for? Hughes carefully gives children unfamiliar with their letters large upper and lower-case characters, yet there is, on most pages, a solid ratio of prose to pictures. Those already conversant with the alphabet are hardly going to have their vocabulary extended by learning – only – that "b is for books and bed". Shirley Hughes's watercolours and use of fine brush

lines, her eye for detail, are as technically bewitching as ever, particularly in a scene of moonlight over back gardens. But she seems to be appealing to an adult eye, and, what is worse, to a condescending image of child cuteness. Over the last thirty years of excellent illustrative work, her younger children's cheeks have grown chubbier; their heads, with occasional alarming echoes of Atwell, top heavy for their bodies. She seems too often in this book to have forgotten the demands of her true audience, especially the demand for graphic consistency. It is confusing enough to be asked to discover Lucy and Tom waving from their garden gate in a crowded double-spread of homes and houses, but irritating as well to find that the chimney-stacks on their own house have jumped around from one picture to another.

sett's *Goblin Market*, Suzanne Rahn on *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*, Mary-Agnes Taylor on the Grasshopper and Ant fable and Dennis B. Quinn on C. S. Lewis's Narnia books. Sidney Homan reviews versions of Shakespeare for the young; Gillian Avery reviews Iona and Peter Ople's *A Nursery Companion*; Jack Zipes reviews an English edition of the Grimms' *German Legends* and Perry Nodelman reviews children's writers on writing. Craig Werner's final essay gives "A Blind Child's View of Children's Literature".

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## Paxton Arms annals

Gerald Mangan

AGNES OWENS  
*Gentlemen of the West*  
127pp. Edinburgh: Polygon Books. £6.95.  
090491979 X

The school of vernacular fiction which has grown up in the west of Scotland over the past decade or so, centred in Glasgow around such writers as James Kelman and Alex Hamilton, seems to have gained its newest member in Agnes Owens – a fifty-eight-year-old writer whose first novel appears in a cover designed by Alasdair Gray. *Gentlemen of the West* is a series of loosely connected episodes in the life of a young bricklayer, Mac, who lives with his mother somewhere in the semi-rural, semi-drelet outskirts of Glasgow. Her annals of this dead-end parish, "all grind, booze, or trying to get by on the 'dole", probably won't be welcomed by the city fathers in their current campaign to improve Glasgow's image.

Most of the action revolves around the Paxton Arms, a spit-and-sawdust pub with a hard-boiled, hard-bitten clientele, all comic-strip names – Paddy, Mick, Baldy, Pally, Collie, Randy, Splash; their fraternal disagreements shatter the bar-mirror as regularly as the "gentlemen" of the old cinematic West did. It's a violent, friendly, masculine atmosphere in which Mac feels very much at home – a lonely soul who hates his trade, takes no apparent interest in women, and welcomes every opportunity to drink himself into oblivion.

His stories are simple and fairly thin anecdotes, all in plain English except for his rather incongruous Scots dialogue ("Watch wherr yer gawn", I said, very much aggrieved . . .). There is an abortive Hogmanay burglary, a cool encounter with an Anglified former schoolmate, the story of a working television set inadvertently sold for a song. There is also a wrangle over vet's fees when a dog is run over, a dispute with the building-site boss about working in the rain, and a long-running squabble with his slutish mother over bad meals and bad company. The climax features the death of an old drinking-crony, and is treated with a bald pathos; when Mac finally leaves to seek his fortune in the oil-rich north-east, the lameness of his envoi is characteristic:

As I headed for the bus-stop I began to feel better. It was a bright cold morning with a hint of spring in the air, just enough to make me feel optimistic – and even happy . . . It was, goodbye everybody. I was on my way to better things. I was on my way to adventure.

An ingenious sentiment, obviously, but one which the author clearly shares. Agnes Owens's affectionate sympathy for Mac is evident from her tone throughout, and seems to be just as uncomplicated as the amusement she derives from his low-life milieu. Although her age may account for the slightly dated atmosphere, it's surprising to find any woman offering such an uncritical celebration of the Scottish working-class male. Translated into paint, her cartoon-figures could have been called primitive, or just comic; but they're not quite artless enough to be charming, and not quite convincing enough to be funny.



# Misogyny rampant

Douglas Brooks-Davies

FELICITY A. NUSSBAUM  
The Brink of All We Hate:  
English satires on women 1660-1750  
192pp. University Press of Kentucky. £19.  
08131 14985

Felicity Nussbaum has listened with more courtesy than they deserve to the often intemperate voices of our Augustan anti-feminist poets, and the tale she unfolds in this brief and well-written study is an all too familiar one. Restoration satirists rely on the quasi-magical power of their craft to banish creatures they both fear and are fascinated by. In the eighteenth century this tradition continues, complemented now by the sentimental ideal of the chaste, domesticated female. Both conventions – woman as whore and as virtuous domestic – derive from the two roles of Eve, but Genesis, Nussbaum argues in detail, is only part of the story. Behind the tradition of Augustan anti-woman satire lie many ancient and several, particularly French, moderns.

This monograph has the modest aim of documenting the conventions governing satires against women in its chosen period and providing "a significant sampling of the kinds of myths created in the poetry". Drama, novel, and other forms are mostly ignored. Familiar sociological background is swiftly covered and, after a hesitant confrontation with the complexities of Puritanism's contradictory influence on woman's position, Nussbaum proceeds in her second chapter to a horrifying résumé of satirical misogyny: woman, daughter of Eve, creates chaos like her mother. Her womb is literally a tomb. Giving birth to death she is also omnivorous of men. Oldham's "A Satyr Upon a Woman" who, he claims, "was the Death of his Friend", is an unpleasant example of the kind of poem produced by such a view, for here the poet's pen executes a phallic revenge: "My ink unbid starts out, and flies on her, / Like blood upon some touching murder-

er". Pope, in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, will admit the closeness of his own inky venom to the devil's poison. Oldham, in contrast, seems blind to the way he becomes the victim of his own satire, as does the writer of *Misogynus* (1682), who claimed that woman was created from the drugs remaining after the creation of the venomous toad. In this climate of opinion writing women become whores, their pens as poisonous and as sexually motivated as their bodies. The fat and comically unpregnant hero of Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* belongs, in comparison, to a fresher and saner world.

Nussbaum gives a sensible account of Butler's Amazonian Trulla and handles Rochester and his critics judiciously. And if I felt less happy with three of the four remaining chapters – on translations of Juvenal 6, on Swift, and on Pope – it was because they do not show enough mythological, political or verbal awareness. Nussbaum does not, for example, realize that the woman in Dryden's translation of Juvenal 6, with the "Formidable Tow" of a coiffure, who, if you look behind her, is "Duck-leg'd" and ridiculous, is at once the turreted earth mother Cybele and the *Fraude* of emblematic tradition. Had Nussbaum caught the hint it would have added point to her argument. Insensitivity to political innuendo is damaging in the Pope chapter, where she misses the ideal recommended through Martha Blount in the *Epistle to a Lady*. She is a rising and stable moon, with a reference to *Paradise Lost*, IV, 606-9, in contrast to hated Queen Caroline, jestingly described as "the same for ever". Nussbaum's reading of the poem should have registered Pope's allusion to Queen Anne's appropriation of the moon-queen Elizabeth's motto, *semper eadem*.

Overall, though, Nussbaum has been thorough and tactful, perhaps too tactful. Her eagerness to redeem Swift from excessive misogyny has made her misread compassion into his description of the "Beautiful Young Nymph" as "battered". There is no sense of need for women's refuges here, I am afraid: Swift means that she is pesty with cosmetics.

# Outlook unsettled

Lachlan Mackinnon

ARDEN REED  
Romantic Weather: The climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire  
338pp. University Press of New England. \$33.  
087451 2778

Arden Reed believes that the place of weather in Romantic poetry has been seriously underestimated. Romanticism, he argues, returns to a pre-Enlightenment (in which word he finds climatic significance) tradition of learned meteorology. Weather for him consists of all that Aristotle might have classed as meteoric, an initial widening of range he is hasty to exploit. Because the weather fluctuates, it "approximates difference... one could think of 'weather' as a (non) name for difference when difference is introduced into the world at the fall (which is a falling away from identity)".

Weather turns into the human condition: the mist Coleridge hopes imagination will throw over the world is at once clarifying and obscuring. Against the more usual view that Coleridge imagines creativity in terms of sun and warmth, Reed argues for a poetics of frost in which the speaker is imprisoned by the forms he creates. He suggests daringly that when, at the end of "Frost at Midnight", Coleridge looks out at what is around, what he sees is really his own face reflected in the window, thrown before him like the spectre of the Brocken. That spectre, an illusory shadow thrown from behind on mist ahead, plays an important part in the discussion, for the Ancient Mariner too sees his own reflection. When he leans over the side of the vessel and blesses the water-snakes, what he really blesses is his own image. The colours of the snakes are the colours of the halo which surround the spectre's head.

There is no wonder, then, that the Ancient Mariner appears in a "Rime", as Reed is at pains to establish. With his "glittering eye" and the "hoar" in his beard, the Mariner is clearly a snowman. Life-in-Death freezes him so that he becomes a hero of negation and error: we cannot at all trust what he tells us, as he is ultimately the creature of his own narrating voice. Reed does not point out that, like Stevens's hero, he

sees "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is", but might well have done. The inherent duplicity of literary form leaves the Mariner in desolation with the poet, misting the window with their breath as they try to see past their reflected selves.

It never rains but it pours. The transition to Baudelaire is made through an anecdote of De Quincey's in which Coleridge tells him incessantly about Piranesi. Baudelaire omits this from his translation, which has caused previous comment. The reason for this is that the story does not vanish but "is displaced to leave its traces elsewhere in Baudelaire" and "turns out to be the absent center of a nexus of Baudelaire's texts that it generates... Like Coleridge's inaccuracies, Baudelaire's omission is curiously faithful to Piranesi, for the only way to remain faithful to a 'Piranesian text' is to violate it".

Using *Le Poème du haschisch*, Reed presents "La Pipe" as a poem in which the author is truly vaporized – the Baudelairean term with which he makes the greatest play – by being smoked. The pipe speaks the poet and poetry, its own first person. At the same time, it contains hashish or opium, which alone can explain the pleasure it claims to give. This extension of the poem's literal lightheartedness is plausible, and would be more so in another context, but here, as soon as we reach "Le Charogné" we are back in the funhouse. Reed translates "une femme lubrique" as "a whore", a narrowing which misses Baudelaire's critical unpleasantness and foreshadows the limitations of this analysis. It also exemplifies the author's occasional uncertainty with French. His reading finds art and corruption inseparable, where Baudelaire offers a cynical triumph of art. The clichés with which the loved is addressed are not merely, as Reed suggests, subversive of the genre but clues with the implicit knowledge that the miser gains nothing from poetic immortality. Baudelaire tells Reed that "To refuse the finality of death... means to sustain the act of reading: death may be defined as that which does not have the possibility of signification." It may be heard more in Baudelaire and in Coleridge and will feel that the epigraph by Stevens is wrong to declare that "It is enough To believe in the weather".

# Southern stuff

Daniel Karlin

JACOB KORG  
Browning and Italy  
246pp. Ohio University Press. £19.50.  
0821407252

Not Browning in Italy, you notice: Jacob Korg's ambition is broader. "Italy in Browning", if anything, Korg aims to show what the idea of Italy meant to Browning, how the experience of this richly "other" culture entered into and changed his art. In terms of climate and landscape, of contemporary and historical culture, Italy represented ways of being to which Browning's Northern Protestant appetites voraciously responded, but which his equally Northern and Protestant intelligence was fully capable of assimilating and putting to creative use. "Italy is stuff for the use of the North, and no more", he wrote to Elizabeth Barrett on one occasion; and, although that statement has its own special reasons for being so crude, there is a conviction in it which can be traced in even the most apparently sympathetic of Browning's poems on Italian subjects. If it is true that, as Henry James said, Browning's Italy is more concretely realized than that of any other English poet, it is also true that, as James would have been the first to acknowledge, the materiality of a description is no guarantee of the plainness of its intention. In this connection, Korg is quite wrong to read "The Englishman in Italy", an early poem consisting almost wholly of description, as merely a "series of remarkable vignettes that form a string... not a structure". On the contrary, Browning here engages in an intense scrutiny of his own notion of the "use" of Italy which gives the poem a powerful and complex narrative structure, making the fullest expressive use of the dramatic monologue form; and anti-

cipating, among other poems, both "Pippa Lippi" and "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came".

This small misjudgment represents a larger failure on Korg's part to get to grips with his subject. He has one fresh and interesting critical idea – that of the connection between the Italian Renaissance, the contemporary Risorgimento, and Browning's poetics of rescue and resurrection – but this, which should have been the unifying focus of the whole book, receives scanty and scattered mentions in the course of a dull and superficial chronological ramble through Browning's oeuvre. There are some irritating factual errors: mistakes in the account of the plot of both *Sordello* and *A Soul's Tragedy*, Alfred Domest misquoting Arthur, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* given one performance only instead of three. More important – and surprisingly for a critic who has written well on Browning before – Korg's comments on the poems themselves are desultory and critically impoverished. Surely we do not need to be told that in *The Ring and the Book* "Browning creates a vivid impression of time and place by details drawn from his experience and written sources". Or again: "In *Pippa Passes*, the people rise vividly before the reader to speak for themselves, while the author seems absent". They don't, and he isn't, and in any case the whole contrast is wrong-headed. Browning deserves better than this kind of jejune treatment.

Among the contributions to *Essays and Studies*, 1984, edited by Raymond Chapman (103pp. New Jersey: Humanities Press / London: John Murray for the English Association, £10.50, 0 1995 4133 6) are G. B. Tennyson on Victorian Biblical Typology, Arthur Pollard on "The Brontës and their Father's Faith", James R. Bennett on *Middlemarch* and Pat Rogers on the *DNB*.

# Venizelists and Antivenizelists

Richard Clogg

GEORGE TH. MAVROGORDATOS  
Silliborn Republic: Social coalitions and party strategies in Greece, 1922-1936  
380pp. University of California Press. £32.  
0320 043588

JAMES BARROS  
Britain, Greece and the Politics of Sanctions: Ethiopia, 1935-1936  
248pp. Royal Historical Society. £18 (or direct to members of the Society £11.44, from Swift Printers (Sales) Ltd, 17 Albion Place, London, EC1M 5RE).  
0391026 909

The modern Greeks have manifested an unhappy tendency towards internecine strife at times of national crisis. Such was the case during the War of Independence in the 1820s, during the Axis occupation of the Second World War and, most spectacularly, during the First World War. This was to give birth to the *Ethnikos Dikhasmos*, or National Schism, which ostensibly arose out of the dispute as to whether Greece should remain neutral or align herself with the Entente Powers, and was to result in the division of the country into two bitterly antagonistic and at times warring camps. As George Th. Mavrogordatos points out in his excellent study, it is now scarcely possible to imagine the climate of "mutual suspicion, fear and paranoia" induced by this civil strife, which was to cast a long shadow over the politics of inter-war Greece. Greek history between the wars has frequently been portrayed as a meaningless succession of putches and pronouncements, and Dr Mavrogordatos has performed a signal service in giving coherence to this period in a tightly argued, if at times, somewhat convoluted analysis.

Mavrogordatos takes as his subject the turbulent period between the Plastiras coup of 1922, in the wake of the catastrophic defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor, and the establishment of General Metaxas's quasi-fascist dictatorship in 1936, a period that more or less corresponds with the first Greek republic. He seeks to explain the establishment and downfall of the Republic not in terms of elite politics or military praetorianism but rather of cleavages which manifested themselves in mass politics. In doing so he effectively demolishes the widely held view that Greek society is uniquely homogeneous, which is not to deny that, historically, it has reflected an unusually high rate of social mobility. Venizelism and Antivenizelism (which could be broadly but not absolutely equated with support for the republic and the monarchy respectively) constituted the two basic *parataxeis*, or political families, of the inter-war period. These were essentially coalitions each grouped around a major party, the

Liberal Party in the case of the Venizelists and the People's Party in the case of the Antivenizelists. Within each *parataxis* attitudes on social questions could vary considerably, as between, for instance, Papanastasiou representing the Venizelist left and Mikhalakopoulos the right.

Venizelism had its origins in an uneasy alliance between an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, bent on capitalist modernization, and a mass base; an alliance held together by the promise of social reform and the irredentist programme of a Greece "of the two continents and the five seas". The disaster of 1922, which put an end once and for all to the expansionist dream, undermined one important plank in the Venizelist programme, while such small urban working-class elements as existed tended to drift either to the newly founded Communist Party of Greece or to "petty bourgeois Antivenizelism". Yet the huge influx of refugees (amounting to a fifth of the country's existing population) remained strikingly loyal to Venizelos and were sufficiently numerous and compactly settled to act as arbiters of the political system throughout the inter-war period. This, together with control of the armed forces between the successful and unsuccessful coups of 1922 and 1935, was to enable the Venizelist civil-military *syngrotima*, or combine, to dominate the political scene until it was knocked off course by the Great Depression.

The Antivenizelists, who like the Venizelists were under the control of bourgeois political notables and had their own network of clients within the armed forces, essentially represented a petty bourgeois reaction against the threat posed by capitalist modernization and, came increasingly to stand, after the refugee influx, for a defensive nativism against the newcomers. In detailing the generally, and frequently bitterly, hostile reception met with by the refugees (sometimes derisively referred to as *giavrotavafismenoi* or "baptised in yoghurt" and scarcely thought of as Greeks) Mavrogordatos effectively knocks another cherished myth on the head, namely that the Greeks are singularly free of racist attitudes. Some of the most revealing and original sections of the book examine the alliance that was forged between the Antivenizelists and Greece's small but compactly settled minorities, among them the Sephardi Jews of Salonica (regarded in some Antivenizelist circles as more Greek than the Anatolian refugees) and the Slavo-Macedonians, and with the Old Calendarists, Orthodox religious obscurantists who stubbornly continued (and continue) to adhere to the Julian calendar after the adoption of the Gregorian in 1922.

The book is full of illuminating insights into the nature and evolution of party politics in Greece; into Venizelist (and Constantinist) "messianism"; into the attempt to transform "personal parties" into "parties of principle"

and to give them some proper organization; and many other questions. The author deserves particular praise for his skill in unravelling the truly Byzantine complexities of electoral law during the inter-war period. Since the war, the Right, with considerable justification, has been accused of manipulating the electoral system for its own benefit (and Andreas Papandreu's socialist PASOK looks set to follow suit, despite a clear commitment to introduce simple proportional representation). But these more recent shenanigans are as nothing compared to the "electoral engineering" of the Venizelists, who shamelessly adopted plurality or proportional systems, and different variants of them, as and when it suited their electoral advantage. The book has numerous tables and the non-numerate may blanch at assertions such as "the existence of superimposed cleavages implies multicollinearity among the respective ecological variables". Overall, *Silliborn Republic* constitutes a quantum leap forward in our understanding of the nature of the Greek political process and is worthy to stand alongside John Petropoulos's splendid *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece 1833-1868*.

If Mavrogordatos paints a broad canvass, albeit with much fine detail, James Barros's *Britain, Greece and the Politics of Sanctions: Ethiopia, 1935-1936* is very narrowly focused. Despite the fact that in the aftermath of the Asia Minor débâcle, she had forfeited a number of her most cherished irredentist aspirations, Greece was firmly aligned with the non-revisionist states of the Balkans and placed great hopes in the collective security arrangements of the League of Nations. She therefore dutifully joined in the policy of sanctions applied to Italy as a result of the invasion of Ethiopia. Professor Barros describes the international and domestic ramifications of Greece's support for sanctions, and points to the way in which some of the country's praetorians who figure prominently in Mavrogordatos's study became uneasy about the consequences of Greece's exposed position. One direct consequence of the sanctions affair was that Britain was to become much more concerned with, and involved in, Greece's internal affairs. The Foreign Office regarded the friendly co-operation of Greece, whether under a republican or a royalist regime, as indispensable in the event of a Mediterranean crisis. The lessons to be learnt from Barros's study are perhaps depressingly predictable, namely that small states must conduct their foreign policy within highly circumscribed parameters and that they are in no position to provoke more powerful neighbours. Barros's book is well organized and clearly written. But whether such a relatively minor episode in international affairs deserves such detailed scrutiny and page after page of lengthy paraphrases of the despatches of British, Greek and Italian diplomats is arguable.

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